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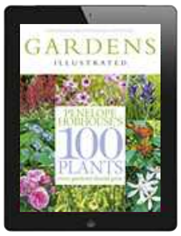
editor's letter

Researching, tracking down and trialling plants can become something of an obsession; I speak from experience and suspect many of you will also have the same 'condition'. Separating the good from the bad or indifferent takes time, therefore, advice from those who've enjoyed a lifetime's learning is always much appreciated, particularly when that person is held in high regard by other plant experts the world over. This issue, I'm delighted that the highly revered garden designer, writer and historian Penelope Hobhouse reveals 100 of her favourites. With her vast knowledge, whittling the list down was never going to be easy, so Penelope has focused on beautiful plants that are exceptionally hard working and which she'd recommend all gardeners try growing. In previous February issues, other luminaries such as Beth Chatto, Piet Oudolf and Dan Pearson have discussed their 100 Must-Haves, and it's fascinating to compare their lists. (Note back issues of printed copies often sell out but digital downloads are available, see page 105 for details.) This month also sees the start of our new Plantsman's Favourites series, written by one of the finest nurserymen in Europe, Hans Kramer of De Hessenhof Nursery in the Netherlands; galanthophile Val Bourne looks at the legendary EA Bowles's snowdrop collection; and expert grower John Hoyland selects the finest witch hazel. I hope you find many of these plants as irresistible as I do and please don't worry if you become obsessed, you're in very good company. Enjoy the issue.

Juliet



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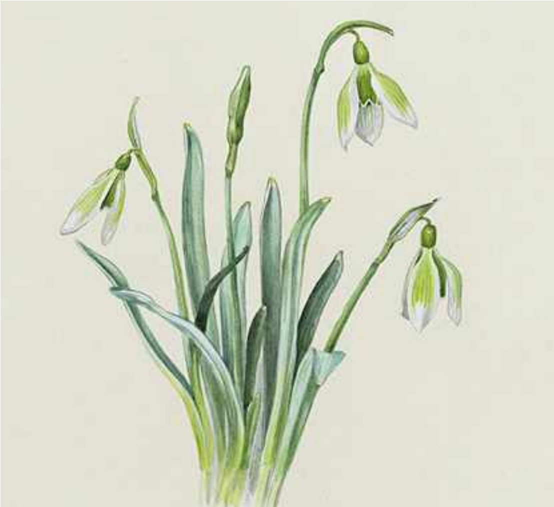
Celebrated garden designer Penelope Hobhouse recommends 100 of her favourite plants, page 39.



Thanks to plant collector EA Bowles many excellent snowdrops remain in cultivation, page 76.

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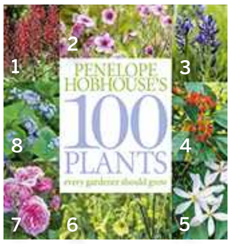
JASON INGRAM, RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY

contents FEBRUARY 2015



COVER IMAGES

1 *Lobelia tupa*, Nicola Stocken Tomkins / The Garden Collection

2 *Geranium palmatum*, N+R Colborn / Garden World Images

3 *Camassia esculenta*, Joshua McCullough / Getty Images

4 *Crataegus* x *lavalleei* 'Carrierei', Geoff Kidd / GAP Photos

5 *Clematis* 'Apple Blossom', Clive Nichols / GAP Photos

6 *Nicotiana langsdorffii*, Deni Bown / Garden World Images

7 *Rosa* Gertrude Jekyll (= 'Ausbord'), Sabina Ruber / GAP Photos

8 *Brunnera macrophylla*, Marianne Majerus / MMGI

Plants

22 **Plantsman's favourites** In the first of a new series, Hans Kramer, owner of the highly respected Dutch nursery De Hessenhof, selects his favourite plants for February

39 **Penelope Hobhouse's 100 great garden plants** The grande dame of garden design recommends the 100 plants every gardener should consider

68 **Plant profile: *Hamamelis*** Its common name, witch hazel, may not have anything to do with sorcery, but this plant with fiery winter flowers can cast a warm spell on cold February days

Places

52 **A work of art** The modernist architect and town planner Sir Frederick Gibberd used sculpture to create a private garden as distinctive as his buildings and public spaces

60 **Making the most of a small space** Garden designer Sarah Price takes a look at three designer gardens to examine what works and what doesn't in a tight urban space

82 **Feathered friends** Poultry and beautiful borders don't always mix, but before you chicken out on keeping hens, let Francine Raymond explain the pitfalls and pleasures of sharing your garden with a flock of feathered friends

People

66 **Who's who** Meet Hans Kramer the unassuming owner of one of the most respected, organic nurseries in Europe – and our new columnist

76 **Keeping the faith** EA Bowles, one of the best know galanthophiles of the last century, was also a talented painter who captured the beauty of his beloved snowdrops in watercolour sketches. Val Bourne explores his legacy

CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS; CRAIG FORDHAM

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122 **Grand designs** Frank Ronan finally moves into his new Californian home and has some bold ideas for transforming its garden

Design

87 **Design update** The latest projects and events, including the winners of the 2014 BALI awards, wild meadows in the city, new exhibitions and the first public glasshouse in the UK to be heated entirely by green energy
90 **Design ideas: the hard stuff – garden materials** Choosing the right plants is only half the story when it comes to creating a beautiful garden – finding the right hard landscaping materials for pathways and paving is just as important. Annie Guilfoyle explains all the points you need to consider
95 **Design sourcebook** Give your feathered friends a stylish home with our selection of coops

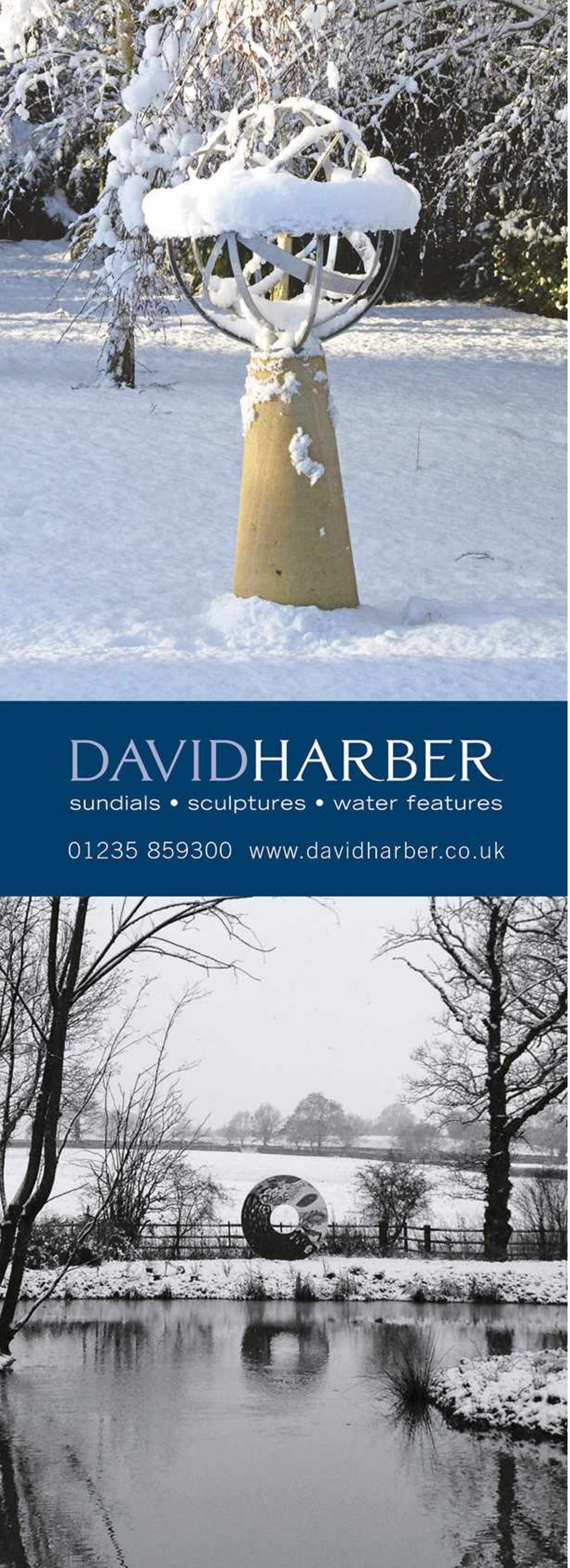
MAAYKE DE RIDDER, ANDREA JONES / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

Regulars

3 **Editor's letter**
6 **Contributors**
13 **Dig in** What's happening this month, including Manchester's snowdrop installation, new tools and bulbs, and the best places to see orchids
19 **Get kitted out** For a perfect potting shed
27 **Gardener cook** Jojo Tulloh gets creative with willow in the garden and winter veg in the kitchen
31 **Gardening talent** Meet Matthew Reese head gardener at Malverleys in Hampshire
36 **Subscription offer** Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition
101 **Books** New books for gardeners, including *Secret Gardens of the Cotswolds* by Victoria Summerley and Hugo Rittson-Thomas
110 **Crossword and how to buy back issues**
111 **Classifieds**
121 **Next issue** What's coming up in March

EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Don't miss your chance to book tickets for the first **GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival** – see page 8
- Join us at our **talk in May** with Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – see page 10
- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition – see page 36
- Enjoy an **exclusive offer on a snowdrops** collection – see page 108. Plus **save 10% on plants** and **30%** on the NGS *Yellow Book 2015* – see page 109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contributors

LYNN KEDDIE

VAL BOURNE

Val, recently voted Journalist of the Year at the Garden Media Guild awards, has been an organic gardener since the age of three. She is passionate about snowdrops and on page 76 she explores the legacy of another galanthophile EA Bowles.

"EA Bowles provides a living link between the Victorian snowdrop lovers and modern galanthophiles."

TIM RICHARDSON

Tim is the founder-director of the Chelsea Fringe Festival and the author of a number of acclaimed books on garden subjects, including *Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden*. On page 52 he revisits the sculpture garden of Sir Frederick Gibberd.

"Revisiting Frederick Gibberd's garden, was a marvellous experience because it is now in such good and careful hands."

FRANCINE RAYMOND

A long-time promoter of making more of your garden, Francine loves gardening then cooking her produce. But it's hens that are her real passion. Would she recommend her feathered friends to real gardeners? Yes, but read her provisos on page 82.

"Aim to give your flock the best life possible and as much freedom as their safety and your gardening ambitions allow."

JASON INGRAM

PENELOPE HOBHOUSE

Until recently Penelope filled her life with writing and garden design. Now over 80, she tends her own 'must-have' plants in a small, sheltered garden in Somerset. On page 39 she recommends the 100 plants no garden should be without.

"Keep the garden simple with strong plant shapes, repetition and restful colour combinations. A restricted palette is often best."

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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival
17-18 April 2015 – see below

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Talk
Tuesday 19 May 2015 – page 10

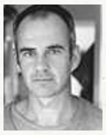
PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Choose from a selection of talks from leading experts and gardening VIPs

FRIDAY 17 APRIL Tickets £25

Troy Scott Smith, Dan Pearson and Chris Marchant
The Authentic Sissinghurst – recapturing the distinctive qualities of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's garden
7-8.30pm held in Malmesbury Abbey

SATURDAY 18 APRIL Tickets £13.50 for each talk

IN MALMESBURY ABBEY	IN THE WESLEYAN ROOM	IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL
 Fergus Garrett Designing with Plants at Great Dixter 10-11am	 **Alys Fowler** Letters to a Bee Keeper 10-11am	 **Derry Watkins** New Plants – Choosing and Using 10-11am
 Tom Stuart-Smith The Language of Place – Gardens and Culture 12-1pm	 **Sarah Price** Planting Styles: A Review of Sarah's Work 12-1pm	 **Annie Guilfoyle** A Creative Approach to Small Gardens 12-1pm
 Sarah Raven The Home Cutting Garden 2-3pm	 **James Alexander-Sinclair** Dancing in Borders 2-3pm	 **Jason Ingram** Gardens Through the Lens 2-3pm
 Anna Pavord The Flowering of Tuscany 4-5pm	 **Rachel Dein** The Ultimate in Pressed Flowers 4-5pm	 **Noël Kingsbury** Travels with NK 4-5pm
	 Tom Mitchell The Modern Day Plant Hunter 5.30-6.30pm	 **Frank Ronan** The Invisible Garden 5.30-6.30pm

As part of the festival why not visit our traditional marquee in the grounds of the Abbey Cloister Gardens where you'll find a selection of our favourite nurseries and suppliers of beautiful garden products. You can also sign up to one of our garden clinics to chat through design and plant queries with an expert. And don't miss out on a visit to the Abbey House Gardens with its formal knot gardens, riverside walks and spectacular tulip displays. Tours can be booked as part of your festival booking. Full details and bookings on:

gardensfestival.com 0871 230 7156*

*calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras

TIM GAINEY / ALAMY, ANDREW MONTGOMERY, CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Key to Penelope Hobhouse's garden design is a strong formal framework paired with exuberant planting – as here at her new garden in Somerset.

Sarah Prices's work at the Olympic Park included plantings of 250 species to create an immersive journey through the UK's plant history.

Jinny Blom's carefully considered design ensures this Chilterns garden sits comfortably in its surrounding landscape.

JASON INGRAM, MARIANNE MAJERUS

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED **Talk**

With Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price

Join us on **Tuesday 19 May** at the Royal Geographical Society in London, with three generations of garden designers

We are delighted to once again be hosting the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Talk. Our speakers – Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – represent three generations of women designers and will discuss their work, as well as consider the role of women in garden design past, present and future. Book now for Standard or Premium tickets. All tickets are allocated seating with premium ticket holders seated in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Penelope Hobhouse is a garden writer, garden designer, garden historian, lecturer and gardener. For 14 years she was in charge of the National Trust garden at Tintinhull House in Somerset. Now in her eighties, she has recently moved house and is relishing the opportunity of developing a new garden.

Jinny Blom set up a landscape and garden design practice in 2000, having previously followed a career as a psychologist. Her gardens are defined by beautiful craftsmanship and intelligent planting. She is currently working on projects in the UK, Italy, the USA and Kenya.

Sarah Price trained in fine art before becoming a garden designer. She achieved worldwide recognition for her work at the Olympic Park in 2012. With a life-long love of wild and natural environments, she believes gardens should inspire a deeper connection with the natural world.

Talk details

- **Date** Tuesday 19 May 2015.
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

PROGRAMME

- **6pm** Doors open – Cash bar available.
- **7pm** Talk begins.
- **8.30pm** Q&A session concludes.
- **9pm** Doors close.

TICKETS

- **Subscribers** Standard £20; Premium £30. Please quote the code **MSUB15** when booking.
- **Non-subscribers** Standard £25; Premium £35.

All tickets are allocated seating. Premium tickets are located in the front section of the lecture theatre.

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED reserves the right to replace any of the speakers with other speakers of equal stature in the unlikely event that any of them are unable to attend. Tickets must be booked in advance. Please let us know when booking of any special access requirements. Tickets are non-refundable. Driving to the lecture is not advised. Nearest London Underground station is South Kensington. Cash bar.

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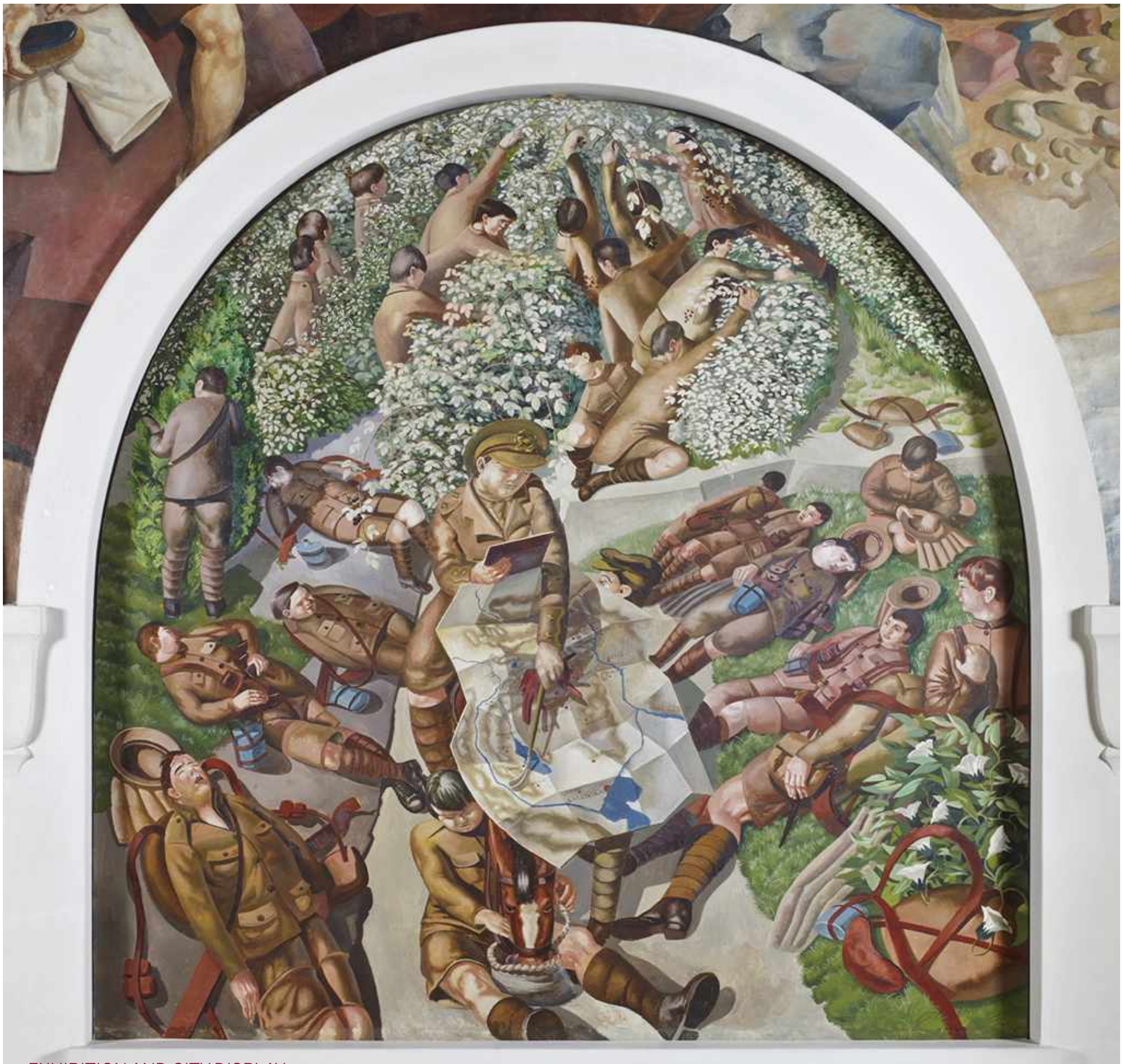
Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON



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EXHIBITION AND CITY DISPLAY

Peaceful reminder

The city of Manchester will bloom with thousands of snowdrops this spring to mark the centenary of the First World War. Chosen as a symbol of hope and peace, the 150,000 snowdrop bulbs were planted by volunteers, community groups and schools back in autumn last year. The event is being co-ordinated by the National Trust's urban gardener in residence Sean Harkin, who is also creating a snowdrop installation at the Manchester Art Gallery entrance that will link the Stanley Spencer exhibition 'Heaven in the Hell of War' to the story of the snowdrop and the First World War. The exhibition runs until 1 March. **manchestergalleries.org** and **nationaltrust.org.uk/manchestersnowdropcity**

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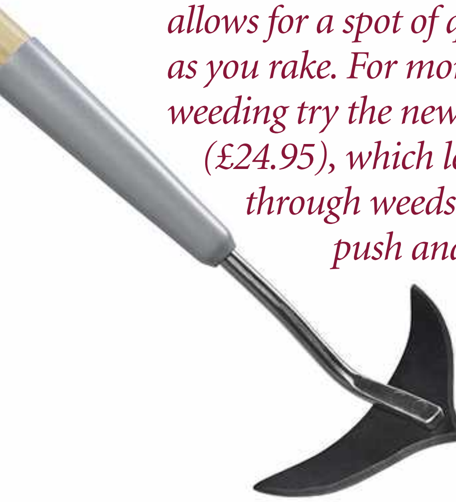
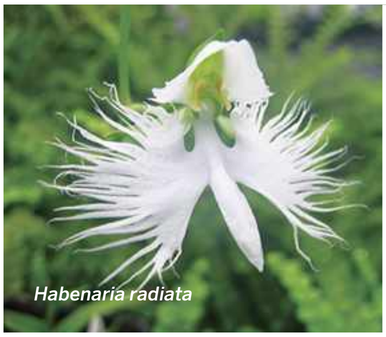


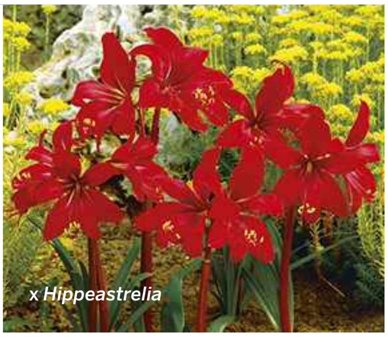
ACCESSORIES

A good, clean job

This gardener's apron from designer and pattern maker Patrick Thomson is made of sturdy waxed cotton with strong, herringbone cotton, wrap-around straps. It features two large front pockets, a reinforced pocket for your secateurs, as well as pockets for phone, twine and pencils. The apron is 70cm long and costs £200 from The New Craftsmen, London W1K 6DG. **Tel 020 7148 3190, thenewcraftsmen.com**



Habenaria radiata



x Hippeastrelia

PLANT NOW FOR SUMMER

Plant more bulbs

There are more wonderful bulbs to plant in spring. Browse specialist de Jager's catalogue of summer-flowering bulbs for a range of favourites, such as dahlias and canna lilies, plus more unusual choices including the bog orchid, *Habenaria radiata*, and x *Hippeastrelia* – a cross between *Hippeastrum* and *Sprekelia* – with intensely red flowers. Catalogue available via **01622 840229, dejager.co.uk**

CELEBRATING HISTORY

Yesterday, today and tomorrow

In 2015 the Buchanan family celebrates 250 years of continuous residence at Hodsock Priory in Nottinghamshire. The historic country estate is known for its displays of snowdrops, which can be seen in the garden's annual four-week opening from 31 January to 1 March. This year will see some four million snowdrops in bloom, plant sales, a campfire in the glade and daily free history talks, plus the planting of a sestercentennial snowdrop lawn for future generations to enjoy. Tickets can be pre-booked online. **Tel 01909 591204, snowdrops.co.uk**

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Diary

- **Seedy Sunday**

Exchange seeds and get hold of sought-after heritage varieties. 1 February, 10.30am-4.30pm. Brighton Corn Exchange, Church Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 1UE. **seedysunday.org.uk**

- **Garden History Society winter lectures**

Series of five lectures: 28 January, Andrew Harland, landscape architect: Gorky Park. 11 February, Dr Clare Hickman, medical and landscape historian: Therapeutic Landscapes. 25 February Richard Wheeler, garden historian: Gardens in the Romantic Era. 11 March Karen Fitzsimon, landscape architect: Order in the Landscape. 19 March Deborah Reid: Petticoats and Plants – Scotland's Gardening Women 1800-1930. All lectures start at 6.30pm, £10. The Gallery, Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. EXCEPT the last lecture 7.30pm, £6. The Lecture Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR. Series ticket also available. **Tel 020 7608 2409, gardenhistorysociety.org**

- **Winter gardening courses at West Dean**

Courses on offer include Designing Your Own Garden weekend course 5-8 February, £322, and Pruning Garden Shrubs and Climbers day course, 14 February, £109. Booking required. West Dean, nr Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ. **Tel 01243 811301, westdean.org.uk**

- **Bosvigo Hellebore Day**

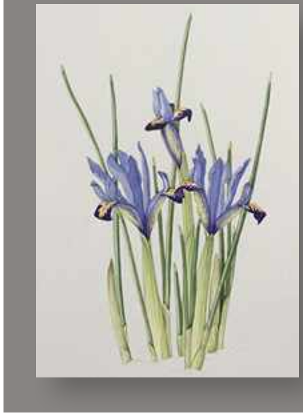
Charity event with sales of hellebores and the opportunity to view the garden. 21 February, 9.30am-4pm (sales begin at 10am). Bosvigo House, Bosvigo Lane, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3NH. **Tel 01872 275774, bosvigo.com**

- **Hellebores and the early spring garden**

Open day at Harveys Garden Plants featuring hellebores and other woodland plants such as *Synthyris*, *Hepatica* and *Adonis*. Plant sales. 20-21 February. Harveys Garden Plants, Great Green, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3SJ. **Tel 01359 233363, harveysgardenplants.co.uk**

- **Godinton House & Garden**

Four seasons in the garden series of workshops – four dates. £55 per course or £200 for all. For more information call **01233 643854** or visit **godintonhouse.co.uk**



- **Illustrating *Iris reticulata* and miniature spring bulbs**

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

APOLOGY

The 'real' Tom

Unfortunately, we printed the wrong image in January's Gardening Talent and would like to apologise. The 'real' Tom Longridge, gardener at Beningbrough Hall near York, is pictured left. The image we used was of Sean Harkin, Manchester's urban gardener in residence. Sean will appear in a Gardening Talent feature later in the year.

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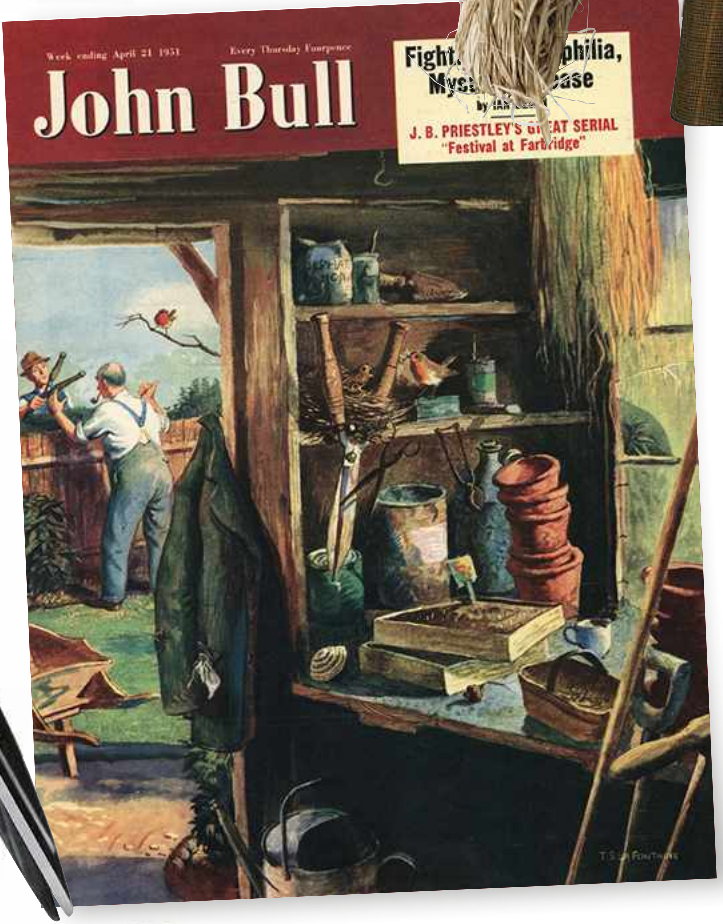
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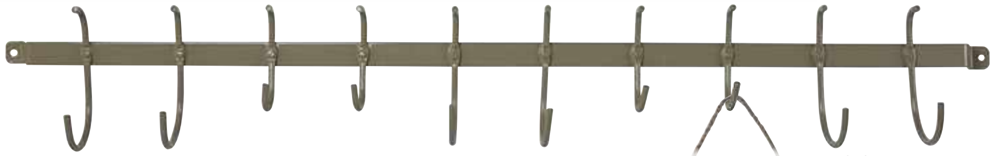

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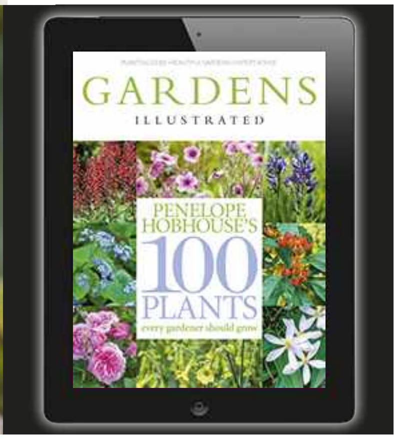
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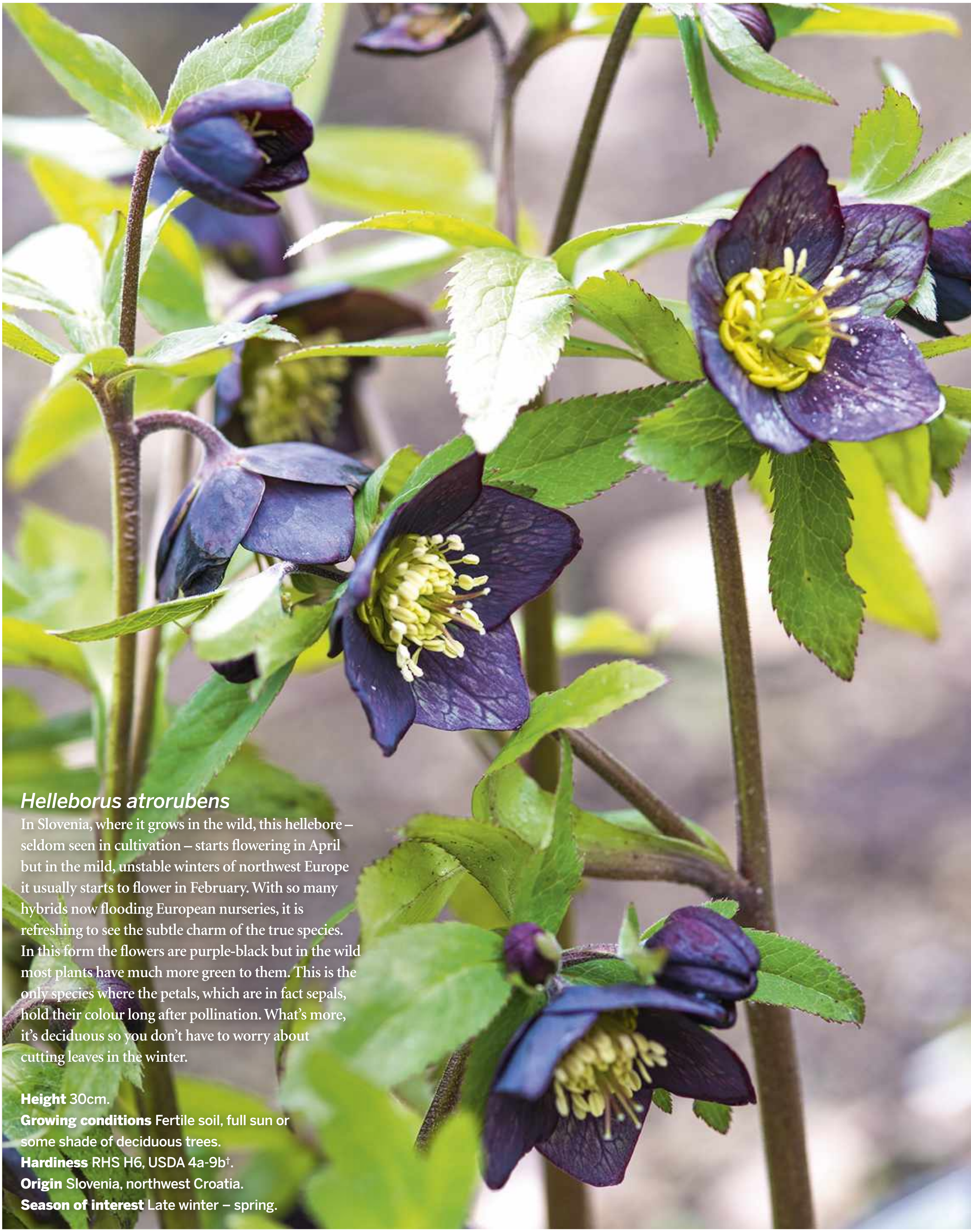


Helleborus atrorubens

In Slovenia, where it grows in the wild, this hellebore – seldom seen in cultivation – starts flowering in April but in the mild, unstable winters of northwest Europe it usually starts to flower in February. With so many hybrids now flooding European nurseries, it is refreshing to see the subtle charm of the true species. In this form the flowers are purple-black but in the wild most plants have much more green to them. This is the only species where the petals, which are in fact sepals, hold their colour long after pollination. What's more, it's deciduous so you don't have to worry about cutting leaves in the winter.

Height 30cm.
Growing conditions Fertile soil, full sun or some shade of deciduous trees.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b[†].
Origin Slovenia, northwest Croatia.
Season of interest Late winter – spring.

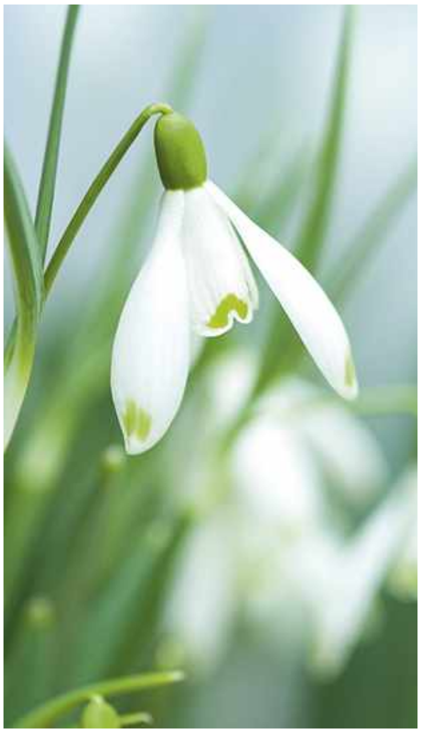
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

February plants

In the first of a new series, Hans Kramer, owner of De Hessenhof nursery in the Netherlands, chooses his favourite plants for February

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer owns Kwekerij De Hessenhof in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Galanthus nivalis Scharlockii Group

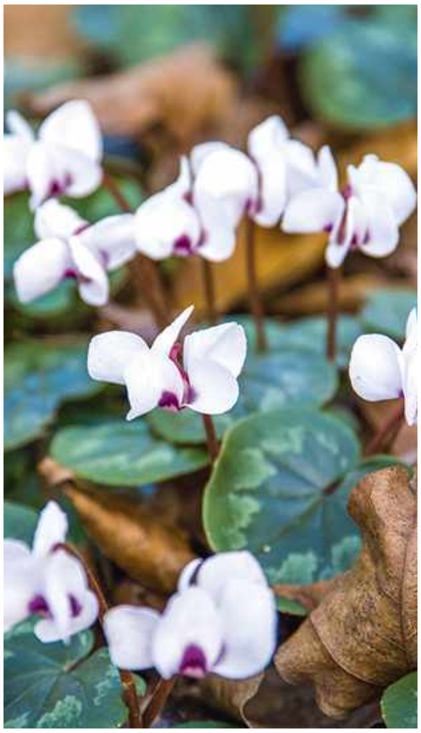
This old variety of *Galanthus nivalis* is instantly recognisable for its spathe (a green narrow, leaf-like structure behind the flower), which is split right along the centre. Although you can't quite see it in this image, the spathe stands upright, like a comical pair of elongated ears that are responsible for its common name of donkey's ears – in the Netherlands we also call them rabbit's ears. There's some debate on its true origin but it was first discovered in 1868 on a tributary of the River Rhine. Given some extra compost, it does well on our sandy soil.

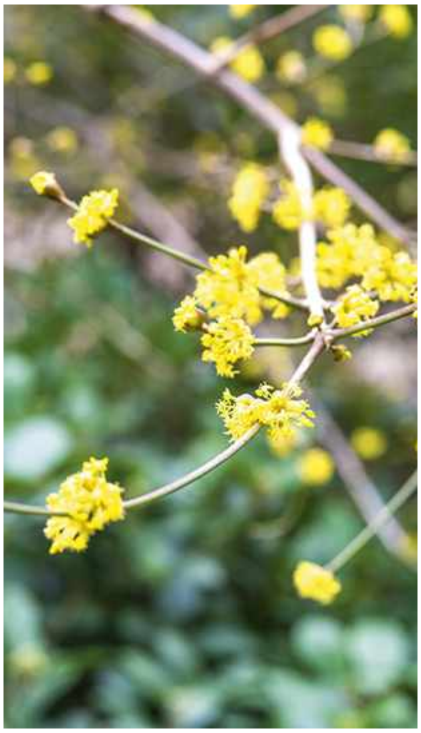
Height 15cm.
Growing conditions Semi-shade, fertile soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Origin Germany.
Season of interest Winter – early spring.

Cyclamen coum subsp. *coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album'

When there is a layer of snow on the ground, the site of the more usual carmine pink cyclamen can lift the spirits, but without snow perhaps this white form is a better choice. The dainty white flowers always have a pink tip at their base and the leaves can sometimes be beautifully patterned too. In our continental winters, we use mulch that contains leaf mould and a layer of grit. The grit helps to germinate the seeds so in a few years you can have hundreds more of these charming little winter-flowering plants.

Height 10cm.
Growing conditions Semi-shade, in soil that is slightly alkaline, but not too wet.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Origin Bulgaria and Turkey.
Season of interest Winter – early spring.





Cornus officinalis

Cornus mas, the Cornelian cherry tree native to many parts of northern Europe, is a justifiably popular choice of small tree for many gardens, but this close Japanese relative is possibly lovelier. It flowers even earlier and fruits much later providing a far longer season of interest. The fruits are rather insipid, but if you're lucky enough to see an older tree, which has a more open habit, you can admire the beautiful bark in shades of orange, brown and grey. You may also find yourself wondering why you don't see this superb little tree more often.

Height 5-7m.
Growing conditions Sun or semi-shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Japan, Korea.
Season of interest Almost the whole year.

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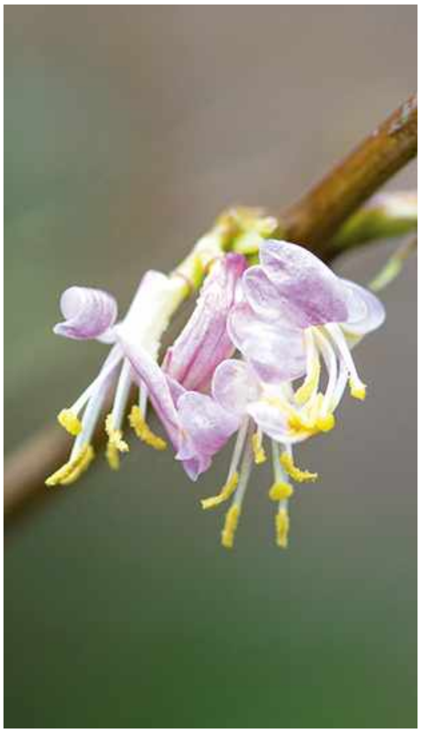
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



Lonicera standishii var. *lancifolia* 'Budapest'

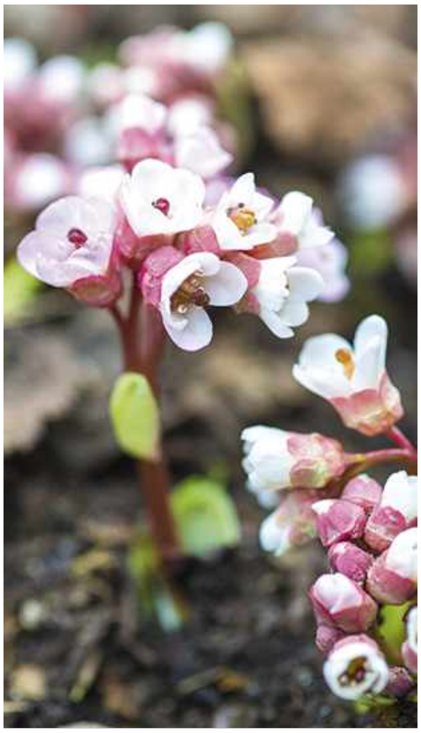
The hybrid *Lonicera* x *purpusii* may be better known but this has a neater habit. You can see the first flowers from November onwards, although they stop flowering for a while when it is freezing. During milder spells, you can enjoy the flowers, which sit in pairs or sometimes threes. The long, pale-yellow stamens are eye-catching and complement the ivory-based, mauve-pink flowers. They have an exquisite lemony scent, so plant this along a frequently used path or near a doorway.

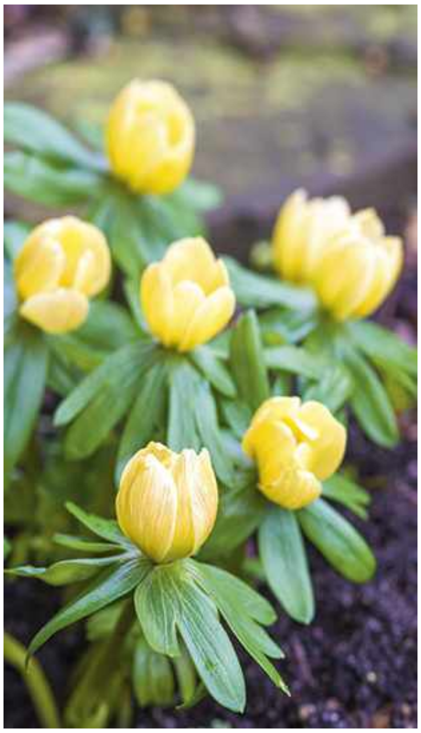
Height 2.5m.
Growing conditions Everywhere but keep sheltered from the northeasterly wind.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin China.
Season of interest Winter – early spring.

Bergenia ciliata

Plant this elephant's ears in a sheltered spot, away from frost pockets, and early in the year you'll be able to admire the beauty of its delicate, baby-pink flowers, which are protected by pinkish calyces. Later, the large leaves will appear and you'll be surprised to see that they're covered with rough hairs on both sides. If the soil is not too dry, they can grow quite big and look luxuriant. They will die down in the winter so you'll have to wait until early spring for more colour.

Height 30cm.
Growing conditions Good soil, not too dry, sheltered. Frost can damage the flowers.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Origin Himalayas (Nepal and Kashmir).
Season of interest Flowers in early spring, leaves provide interest until autumn.





Eranthis hyemalis 'Schwefelglanz'

More *Eranthis* cultivars are coming on to the market, from almost orange to paler-coloured examples. 'Schwefelglanz', which means sulphur glow in German, has pretty straw-yellow flowers by the end of the flowering season. They open with a pleasant apricot touch and get paler as they age. Plant them slightly away from other eranthis to avoid cross pollination, as this plant breeds true from seeds so in a few years you may have a nice patch. They work wonderfully under deciduous trees.

Height 10cm.
Growing conditions Semi-shade under shrubs and trees.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Winter – early spring.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best, both here in the UK and in mainland Europe.

Arboretum Kalmthout, on the Dutch-Belgian border, is home to a world-renowned collection of *Hamamelis*. Most were collected and bred by the plant hunter Jelena de Belder, who helped develop the arboretum. There are some really old, choice specimens here and the scent on a mild, winter day is overwhelming. In February you'll also find thousands of snowdrops and hellebores, many collected by Jelena from her homeland of Slovenia. Arboretum Kalmthout, Heuvel 2, B 2920 Kalmthout, Belgium. Tel +32 (0)3 666 67 41, arboretumkalmthout.be

Dunham Massey

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES

Now is the perfect time to see great colour and interest in the seven-acre winter garden at The National Trust's **Dunham Massey** as its spectacular collection of cyclamen, hellebores, scilla,

Helleborus foetidus

Although this is the shortest living hellebore – it rarely lives longer than three to four years – I could not do without it. It is a good, all-round plant, starting with attractive, deeply divided leaves, which are a dark green. Some cultivars, such as 'Sopron', can have a silvery sheen to the leaf, while *H. foetidus* Wester Flisk Group has striking beetroot-coloured stems that contrast well with the pale-green flowers. These begin as rosettes, which start to elongate as the weather gets cooler, then form light-green buds that gradually open over winter.

Height 50-70cm.
Growing conditions Almost everywhere, good drainage.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Western and southern Europe.
Season of interest Autumn – spring.

Chrysosplenium macrophyllum

Even experts can sometimes have difficulty identifying this evergreen plant. Its leaves offer no real clues. Instead they give it the appearance of a small-leafed *Bergenia*. But then in early spring compound umbels of greenish-white flowers, with long, fluffy-looking, pink stamens, emerge that reveal its true identity. Two years ago, when temperatures here dropped to -22°C, this was the first plant to recover from the frost, flowering a week later. Ideal for a moist, shady place, its long runners and evergreen leaves cover everything.

Height 20cm.
Growing conditions Moist, shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin China.
Season of interest Early spring, evergreen.

Hepatica americana f. rhodantha

This simple, down-to-earth hepatica is one of the best performers at my nursery. Although we have many choice hepaticas from Japan, they can't match the robustness and richness of its flower. It even outstrips the classic *Hepatica nobilis*. Established plants can be more than 30cm in diameter, the non-marbled, kidney-shaped leaves covered completely with the soft pink, anemone-like flowers that look like pretty cushions. Customers love them. This pink-flowering cultivar does much better in our dry acid soil than many others.

Height 15cm.
Growing conditions Shady.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Eastern North America.
Season of interest Winter – early spring.

dogwoods, irises and snowdrops burst into life. Dunham Massey, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4SJ. Tel 0161 941 1025, nationaltrust.org.uk

The **Chelsea Physic Garden** has quirky new displays of snowdrops this year that let you enjoy them at eye level. Its Snowdrop Days, which run from 31 January to 8 February, feature a variety of walks, talks and workshops with garden and snowdrop specialists, including 'Galanthus galore' by John Grimshaw. Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

It's worth checking which NGS gardens open in February. **Kempsford Manor** (Nr Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4EQ. Tel 01285 810131, kempsfordmanor.com) is open on 8, 15 and 18 February for a snowdrop walk along an old canal, while **Kathy Brown's garden** (The Manor House, Church Road, Stevington, Bedfordshire MK43 7QB. Tel 01234 822064, kathybrownsgarden.com) offers a winding winter walk through white birch and skeletal seedheads on 15 February. Visit ngs.org.uk for details of all NGS gardens.

Chelsea Physic Garden

CHARLEI HOPKINSON / CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

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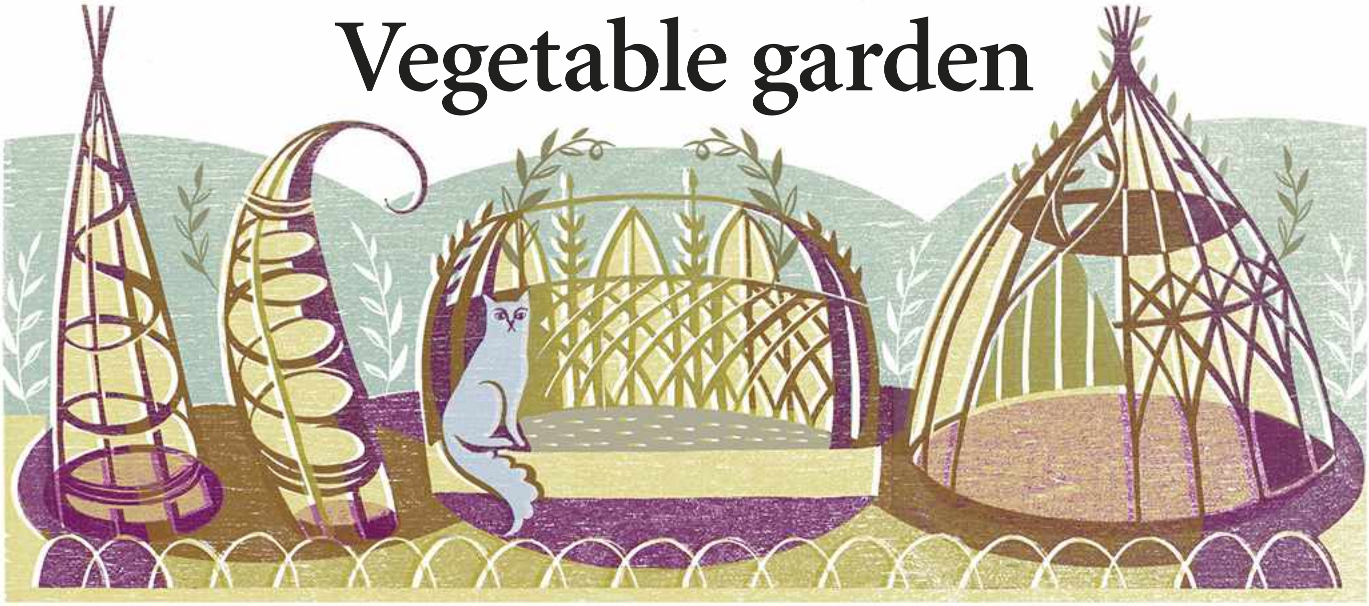
Vegetable garden



Jojo is longing for the soil to bring forth her spring crop of potatoes and getting creative with willow on her allotment

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

There's nothing natural about gardening. Untended, my plot would be a 'natural' tangle of bindweed and brambles. February is the month when the annual process of bullying the earth into submission begins again. In his book *Walden*, written in the 19th century, Thoreau described the paradox of encouraging one plant while suppressing another as 'making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass, making the earth say beans instead of grass'.

Right now I want the earth to say potatoes. I've been stuck in a 'Charlotte'/'Pink Fir Apple' rut for several years, so I went looking for some new-to-me cultivars that will crop either early or late as this best suits the rhythms of our summers. I spoke to Andrew Skea who grows organic and heritage seed potatoes just outside Dundee. His choice for the backyard gardener who wants high yields and blight resistance without recourse to pesticides, is to go organic. "We grow varieties that suit organic production and have good disease resistance. You can't go wrong with the first early 'Colleen'," he says. Lift when the plants are still green for a waxier potato. Andrew's other favourite is 'Sarpo Mira' a red-skinned cultivar that stores well and has high blight resistance, which he sells through Skea Organics (skea.eu), in 1kg bags for £2.20. Andrew also sells 'Highland Red Burgundy', a colourful salad potato that combines a good earthy flavour with a dark-purple skin and a flesh streaked pink and white, and which makes unusual pink mash or chips. Another coloured cultivar worth trying is 'Salad Blue', a main crop potato with a good flavour and blue flesh; both cost £2.40 for 1kg. Use either type to make a gratin guaranteed to start a conversation at the dinner table (see recipes next page).

By February, frost and decay will have caused most plants to die back so have a good look at the bone structure of your plot and impose order if needs be. To avoid compacting the soil it's best to avoid stepping on the earth unnecessarily so make sure all beds are easily accessible by paths. Old carpets are a favourite recycled material on allotments but having recently slipped up spectacularly on paths slimy with mud I've laid new woodchip paths on a black weed suppressant fabric base. I've also planted a fence of single layer espalier or step-over apples. These are one-year, dwarf root stocks planted and trimmed to 30cm and tied to a stake. Later on in August, when three shoots develop, I'll trim the shortest to one bud, then bend the two strongest and tie them to a cane attached to a horizontal wire stretched between two posts. I've always liked the sound of Edward Bunyard's favourite 'Blenheim Orange' but, having discovered that Christopher Lloyd dubbed it 'old woolly pants', I've gone for two of Lloyd's preferences: 'James Grieve', which is juicy and fragrant and both a cooker and an eater, along with 'Sunset', small, juicy and flushed red one side.

SUPPORTING ROLES

Summer's abundance may seem a long way off but there will come a time when exuberant growth needs to be kept in check or given support. Now is the time to order a bundle of willow rods to create a structure for future beans, peas and gourds to clamber up. Or think about planting an eye-catching climber, such as a kiwi or a vine. Take advantage of a bright day to do something constructive and creative: weave a willow arch, teepee or dome as a support for the climbers to come, or make a simple edge to your beds with shorter, more flexible sticks (one-metre rods are perfect) bent over to form overlapping low hoops. These are quick to make but provide tidy, attractive divisions. Somerset Willow Growers (**willowgrowers.co.uk**) sells buff willow rods in varying lengths, with prices starting at £12 for 2kg bundles (average 54 rods). These need to soak for around two to five hours (depending on length) before you use them. If you're worried about thirsty roots, choose dry willow, but if you want a leafy structure, Windrush Willow near Exeter is holding a one-day beginner's course on weaving living willow on 15 February. Visit **windrushwillow.com** for details.

In the kitchen

What is to be done in February with a fair few weeks of winter ahead of us and little appetite for more of the same vegetables? The answer is in the preparation. By eating some winter vegetables raw we can trick our palates into thinking that spring veg, with all its snap and crunch, is here already. Try super-thin curls and discs of raw vegetables in salads or as a side dish or alongside vegetable purées. Contrast is a good thing when the palate is a little jaded. Think of long, white slices of mooli or black radish or little circles of purple carrot or turnip curled paper thin over a salad of thinly sliced ham. To slice vegetables really thin use a mandolin cutter or the latest must-have kitchen gadget, a spiralizer. Other raw root vegetable salads include remoulade, made with peeled and julienned celeriac mixed with a mustard, lemon juice and mayonnaise dressing and plenty of finely chopped parsley, or a salad of grated beetroot, chervil and crème fraîche. Ring the changes with coleslaw by grating carrot, red onion, beetroot and apple and adding a handful of cooked chickpeas, dress with lemon and oil, season and sprinkle over sumac for a final bit of zing.

> By eating some winter vegetables raw we can trick our palates into thinking that spring veg, with all its snap and crunch, is here already

Chilli is a great taste reviver. For a hot and spicy Vietnamese carrot salad, take three medium carrots, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks. Heat 100ml rice vinegar and over a low heat, whisk in two tablespoons of caster sugar and heat slowly until the sugar has dissolved. Allow the mixture to cool and then pour it over the carrots and leave to soak for an hour or so. Once soaked, lift the carrots out of the vinegar and mix with four heaped tablespoons each of finely chopped coriander and mint leaves. Add one bird's eye chilli, deseeded and finely chopped, and three spring onions, peeled and cut into slithers. In a separate bowl whisk up one-and-a-half tablespoons of soy sauce, two tablespoons of rice vinegar, half a teaspoon of sesame oil and a pinch of caster sugar. Pour the dressing over the carrots and toss well. Season to taste and garnish with a sprig of mint or coriander.

Hasten the onset of spring by harvesting the year's first (if very small) crop of green shoots, to add to a comforting toasted sandwich. Snip a small handful of shoots from your autumn-planted onions. Wash well and chop very finely, then layer them with plenty of grated cheddar cheese between two slabs of sourdough bread. Butter the outside of the sandwich, heat a heavy frying pan and put the sandwich in with a tin plate to weigh it down. Let it sizzle for a minute or two until golden brown and then turn it over and cook on the other side (without the plate). Serve with spicy quince jelly. □

RECIPES

Vegetable gratin

Potato gratin comes very near the top of my comfort food list, but you can make a gratin with other vegetables. One of my favourite dishes is potato combined with celeriac, but you can also try squash, parsnip, swede and turnip placed in layers (serves 4): 600g waxy yellow potatoes or other vegetable, 1 clove garlic, peeled and lightly crushed, 200ml single cream, 100ml milk, sea salt and pepper, nutmeg, 1tbsp butter (approx 15g) plus a little for greasing, 3tbsp parmesan. Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas 4. Slice the potatoes or other vegetables into very thin coins (best to use a mandolin cutter). In a bowl rinse the potato slices well then toss dry in a clean tea towel and keep wrapped up. Whisk together the cream and the milk. Rub the garlic over the bottom of a gratin dish, then discard. Butter the dish. Put a single layer of potato slices over the bottom. Season lightly and add a few scrapes of nutmeg. Repeat. To finish, dot the top with small pieces of butter. Pour over the liquid mixture. Sprinkle with grated parmesan. Cover with baking parchment and bake for 45 minutes, pressing the paper down half way through and taking it off for the last 15 minutes. Test the middle with the point of a knife to make sure it is cooked through. Serve with a green salad and smoked mackerel or hot smoked salmon for a simple supper.

Roasted rhubarb

If you are lucky enough to have rhubarb ready to crop, this is a great easy dish. 6-7 stalks rhubarb, 5-6 pods star anise, 2-3tbsp sugar, 250ml water or apple juice. Wash, trim and cut the rhubarb into chunks. Lay it in a roasting tray. Scatter over the sugar and star anise seed pods. Pour over water or apple juice and roast in the oven at 180°C/gas 4 for around 20 minutes or until the rhubarb is soft but still holding its shape. Serve on breakfast porridge.

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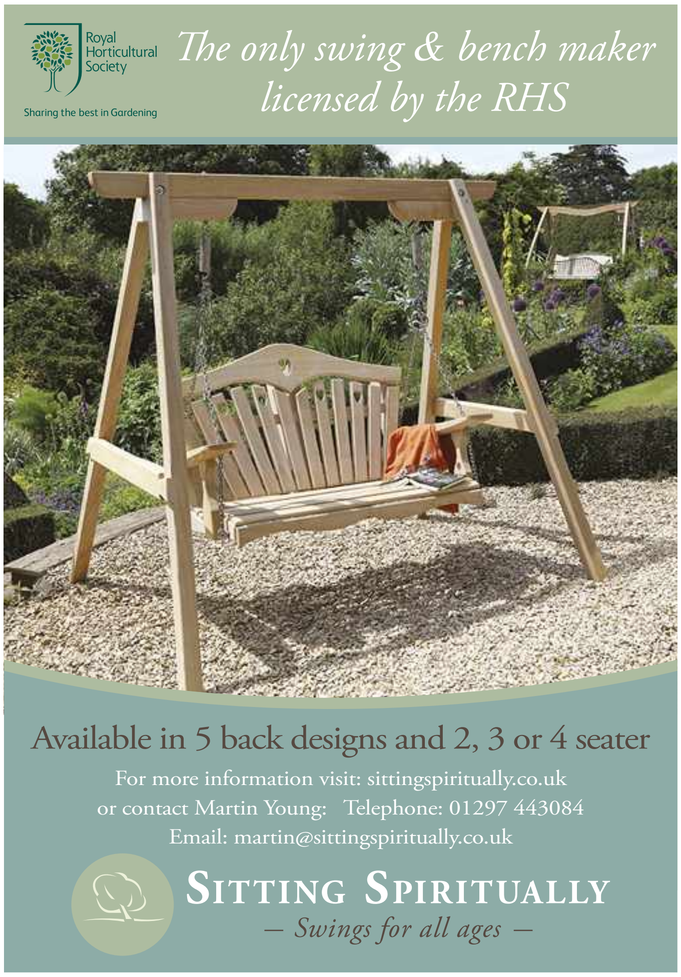
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SITTING SPIRITUALLY
— Swings for all ages —

Matthew Reese

Influenced by natural plantings and vast landscapes, head gardener Matthew believes gardens should first and foremost create an atmosphere

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Who has inspired your career the most? My grandma, she took me to my first lecture on alpines and has always enjoyed gardening.

Who are your horticultural heroes? William Robinson, he was the true Victorian pioneer, advocating a more naturalist style of planting when formal bedding was all we had, and is directly responsible for the type of gardening we see at Great Dixter and Sissinghurst today.

Favourite landscape that has influenced you The tundra in northeast Greenland. I was there as a teenager for six weeks and it was beautifully bleak. There were no trees or buildings, the atmosphere was incredibly moving. When we build gardens and landscapes I always think it's the atmosphere that really matters most.

Three worthwhile tips for every gardener Learn the basics, how to dig, weed, stake etc – this is your foundation on which everything else is built. Be ruthless; if something isn't working, be it in the border or elsewhere, hook it out and try something else. Visit Great Dixter.

With whom would you most like to have tea in the garden? Early 20th-century plant collector Reginald Farrer, best known for his book on rock gardens. I'd like to hear first hand about some of his escapades.

Favourite planting style English flower garden – basically the mixed border, but not too many grasses or exotics. I love self-sowers in the border and climbers casting themselves through perennial plantings.

Least favourite plant group *Heuchera* hybrids and selections. I hate these artificial hybrids that look quite uncomfortable in the garden and are especially disruptive in the woodland garden.

What's the biggest challenge facing gardeners today? Getting good practical training.

If you had to leave your garden in a hurry, what one plant would you take with you? I would take my citrus. I picked up the seed when visiting a friend in Latvia. It came from an orange-coloured lemon he'd brought back from Tajikistan. It has been with me from Kew, to Dixter, to Dorset and now to Berkshire – 12 years in total, but no fruit as of yet.

Favourite gardening books *An Encyclopaedia of Annual and Biennial Garden Plants* by CO Booth, a classic that will probably never be bettered, and *British Trees and Shrubs* by Reverend CA Johns.

Contact fastdog40@mac.com

- Matthew begins a new series on container planting starting in the March issue.

The Spring Garden Planner

With spring just around the corner, you can get a head start in the garden by taking stock, planning and prioritising a number of key garden tasks. Clear and prepare the ground ready for early plantings and have a general tidy up to reduce potential pests and diseases from getting a grip. While plants are dormant, it's also the perfect time to fix fences, and make sure any hard landscaping, including pathways, water butts and compost bins are in good order. Certain plants, for example hardy evergreen hedges and some winter-flowering shrubs, can be pruned; deciduous hedges can be renovated; and perennial grasses cut back to allow for new growth. But, of course, for gardeners the most exciting thing about spring is the prospect of plants. Some seeds may be sown under cover – ideally in a greenhouse, or outdoors under a cloche or fleece or in a cold frame – and seedbeds should be prepared outdoors. As soon as weeds start to germinate, you know that temperatures have increased sufficiently to warm the soil enough to start planting in earnest. And as long as the ground isn't frozen, it's a good time to plant trees and shrubs. In truth, February can still be very cold, so be flexible and make sure you take advantage of the best days it offers up.

Juliet

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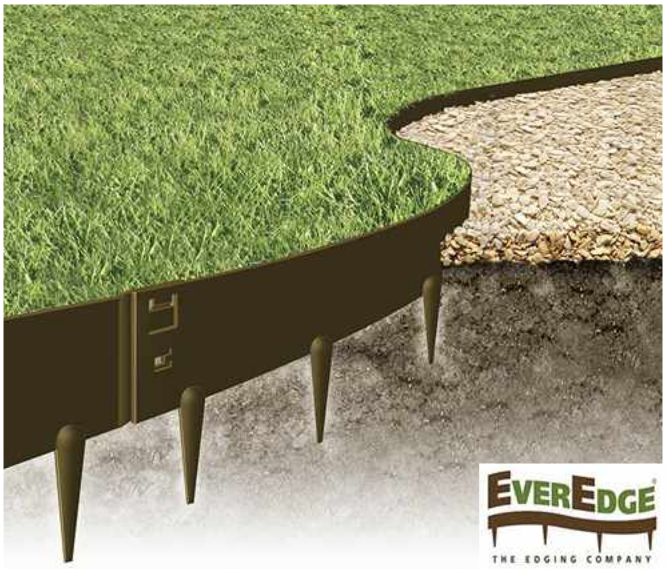

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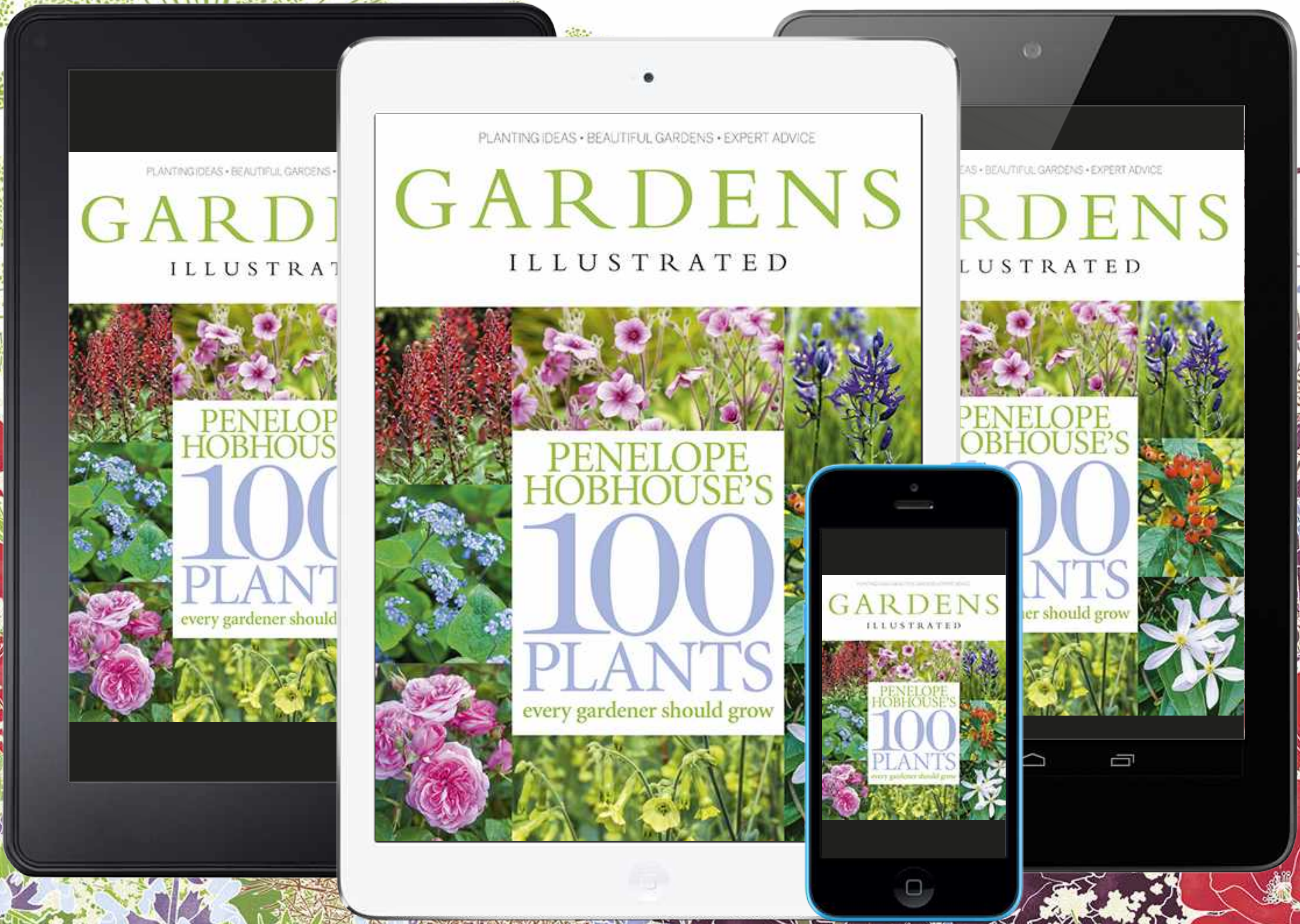
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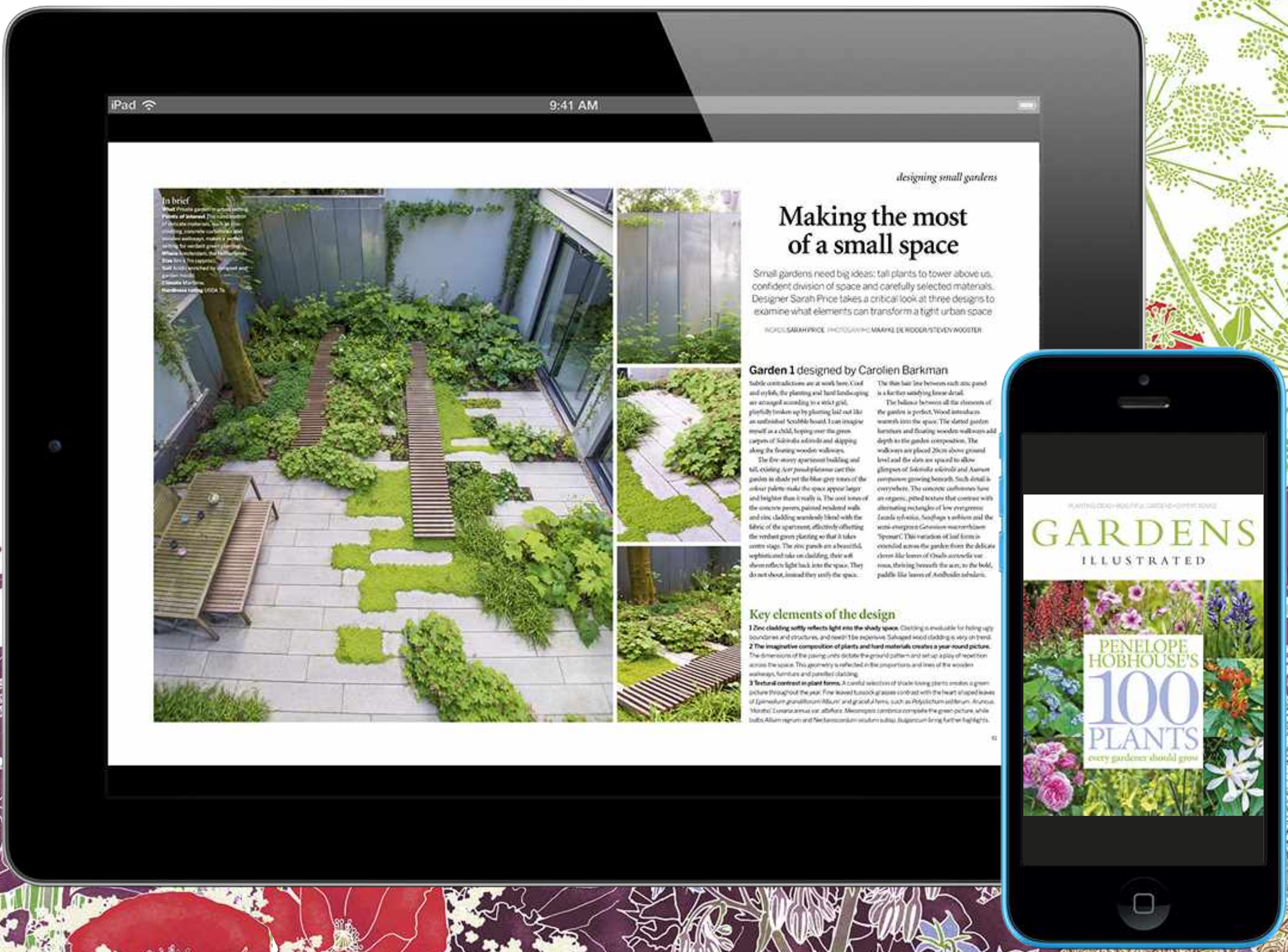

designing small gardens

Making the most of a small space

Small gardens need big ideas: tall plants to tower above us, confident division of space and carefully selected materials. Designer Sarah Price takes a critical look at three designs to examine what elements can transform a tight urban space

SARAH PRICE MAAYKE DE RIDDER/STEVEN WOOSTER

Garden 1 designed by Carolien Barkman

Key elements of the design

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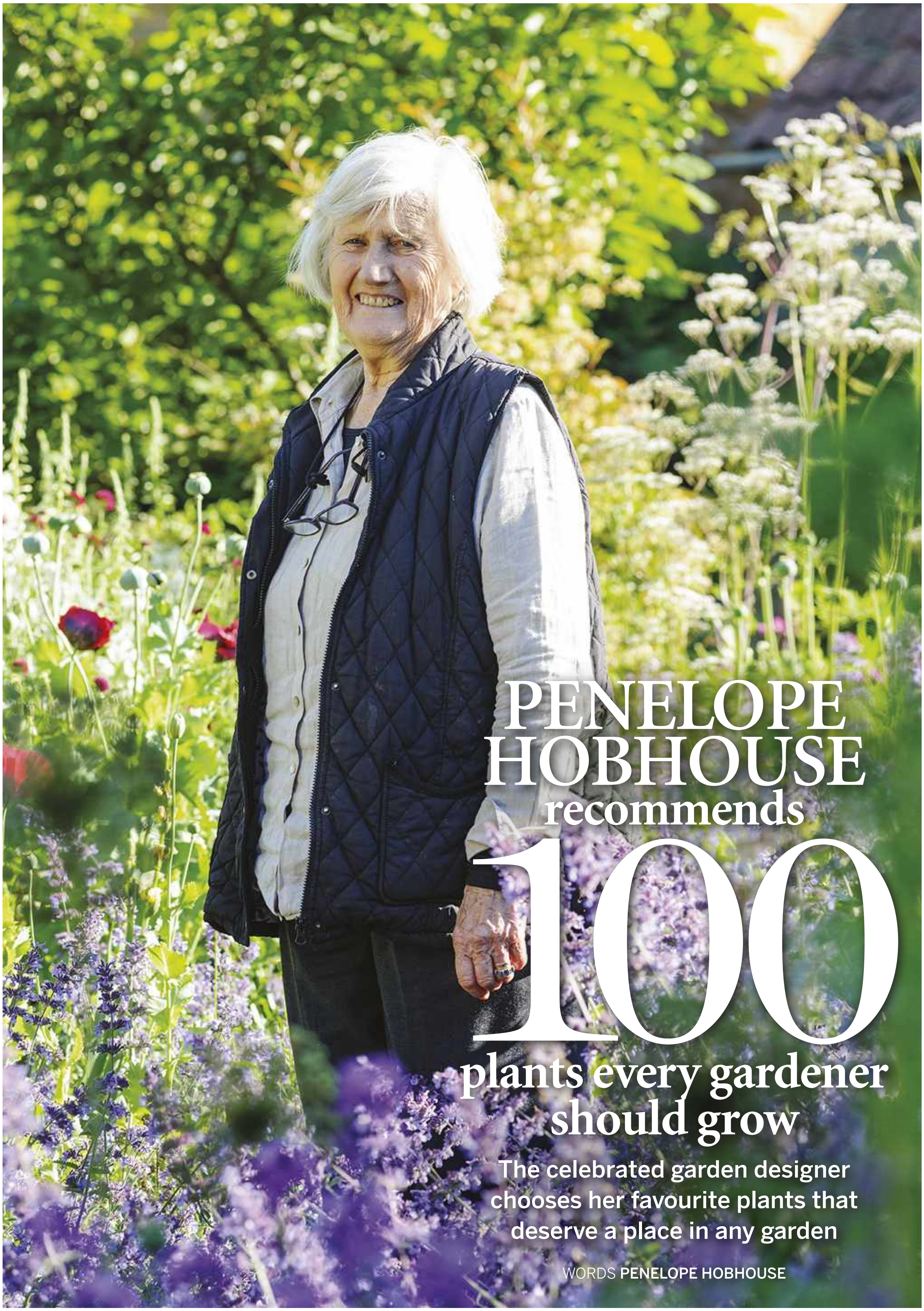

PENELOPE HOBHOUSE recommends 100 plants every gardener should grow

The celebrated garden designer chooses her favourite plants that deserve a place in any garden

WORDS **PENELOPE HOBHOUSE**

JASON INGRAM

1 *ABELIA* X *GRANDIFLORA* 'LAKE MAGGIORE' SHRUB
Bears a profusion of pink and white flowers above attractive, glossy, small, green leaves. Semi-evergreen, it is useful as a single plant in the border or, even better, as a pair framing a gateway. AGM*. **Height (H)** 2.5m. **Spread (S)** 1m. **Conditions (C)** Any soil, sun/semi-shade. **Season of interest (SI)** Late summer to autumn. **Hardiness rating (HR)** RHS H5.

2 *ABUTILON* X *SUNTENSE* 'JERMYNS' SHRUB Slightly tender and deciduous with abundant, bowl-shaped, dark-mauve flowers on long stems over a long period. Showy and highly desirable, it can be grown from seed. AGM. **Common name (N)** Indian mallow. **H** 3-6m. **S** 2m. **C** Light, well-drained soil. Full sun. **SI** From early summer. **HR** RHS H4.

3 *ACACIA PRAVISSIMA* SHRUB/TREE
Tender, small, evergreen tree or large shrub with slender, pendulous branches bearing bright-yellow flowers in thick racemes. Attractive buds, carried by late autumn, give winter interest. AGM. **N** Oven's wattle. **H** 5-8m. **S** 5m. **C** Well-drained soil in full sun. **SI** Early spring. **HR** RHS H3, USDA 8a-10a.

4 *ACANTHUS MOLLIS* LATIFOLIUS GROUP PERENNIAL Almost evergreen with large glossy, elegantly lobed, green leaves (in hot climates these disappear in summer). In late August to September prickly spikes of white to purple hooded flowers can spring to 1.5m tall. Spreads in shade to give weed-free ground cover. A noble plant but needs space. **N** Bear's breeches. **H** 1-1.5m (leaves 75cm). **S** 1m. **C** Well-drained soil in dappled shade. **SI** Year long. **HR** USDA 6a-8a.

5 *AGAPANTHUS* 'ALAN STREET' PERENNIAL Bred by Alan Street at Avon Bulbs, this agapanthus has very dark, sultry blue flowers. I grow it in a container and give it winter protection. **N** Blue African lily. **H** 60cm. **S** 5cm. **C** Pot with rich soil and add dressing in spring. **SI** Autumn.

6 *AJUGA REPTANS* PERENNIAL
Evergreen perennial that provides ground cover under trees or shrubs or edging beside paving stones. Needs frequent control but is a valuable mat-forming weed suppressor. Attractive blue flower spikes in summer. **N** Bugle. **H** Almost flat with 15cm flower spikes. **S** Rapid stoloniferous spreader. **C** Moist soil. **SI** Summer. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

7 *AKEBIA QUINATA* CLIMBER
Semi-evergreen twining climber, ideal for covering pergolas (or scrambling through taller shrubs) with attractive leaves and very beautiful, scented pendulous, dark reddish-purple flowers. Prefers a warm spring and hot summer. **N** Chocolate vine. **H** 4m. **S** 6m. **C** Well-drained soil. Keep moist in summer. Sun or dappled shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** USDA 5a-8b.

8 *ALBIZIA JULIBRISSIN* TREE
Grown for its graceful, fern-like, bi-pinnate leaves and attractive flower heads in summer. Protect from hard frost and keep dry, especially when young. **N** Silk tree. **H** 6m. **S** 4-6m. **C** Any well-drained soil. Full sun. **SI** Spring. **HR** USDA 6a-10b.

9 *ALCHEMILLA MOLLIS* PERENNIAL
This clump-forming, prolific seeder is an invaluable old friend for all gardeners. Lovely green, soft, hairy leaves and loose cymes of pale yellow. Cut back flowers and leaves after spring performance to encourage late flowers. AGM. **N** Lady's mantle. **H** 60cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Any soil type. Sun or semi-shade; survives drought. **SI** Spring – summer. **HR** RHS H7.

10 *ALLIUM HOLLANDICUM* 'PURPLE SENSATION' BULB
Long, strap-shaped, grey-green leaves with tall stems topped with 8cm-wide umbels of deep-violet flowers. Position in groups and where dying leaves can be concealed. AGM. **N** Onion. **H** 90cm. **S** 7cm. **C** Well-drained soil in full sun. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H7.

11 *ANEMANTHELE LESSONIANA* GRASS
Once known as *Stipa arundinacea*, this appealing grass looks great all through

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the year. It seeds very freely and is easily transplanted (except in cold weather). The thin leaves assume wonderful brownish gold and red tints through the late season. AGM. **N** Pheasant grass. **H** 1m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Least fussy plant. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H4.

12 *ANEMONE BLANDA* PERENNIAL
Popularly naturalised in open woodland but is happy under deciduous shrubs. Irregularly lobed, dark-green, fern-like leaves frame deep-blue daisy flowers on single stems. Takes a few years to reach its best but is worth the wait. AGM. **N** Windflower. **H** 8cm. **S** Clumps to 15cm. **C** Well-drained soil in part shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-10b.

13 *ANEMONE X HYBRIDA* 'HONORINE JOBERT' PERENNIAL
Tall, hardy perennial with clear-white flowers – perfect for the late border. Happy in sun or semi-shade. Takes a few years to establish but then quickly spreads to become a feature. AGM. **N** Japanese anemone. **H** 1-1.5m. **S** 50cm-1m. **C** Any soil type, moist but well drained. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

14 *ANEMONE NEMEROSA* 'ROBINSONIANA' PERENNIAL Native woodlander, which happily brightens a shady corner with its large, lavender-blue flowers. AGM. **N** Wood anemone. **H** 8-15cm. **S** 13cm. **C** Any garden soil, prefers light shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H6.

> *Never forget to provide a strong structure that will define the garden. Use yew, hornbeam or box hedges to unite the plan.*

15 *ASTER X FRIKARTII* 'MÖNCH' PERENNIAL
Provides elegant, lavender-blue, rayed flowers from late July until October. Contrasts happily with brighter neighbours, including the fierce yellows of rudbeckias and inulas. Worthy of a prominent position, it thrives in sun or semi-shade. AGM. **N** Michaelmas daisy. **SI** Autumn. **H** 90cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Sun and rich soil. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

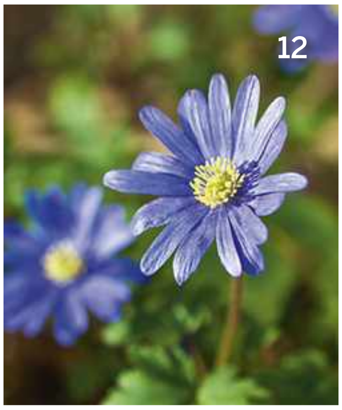
16 *ASTRANTIA MAJOR* 'ALBA' PERENNIAL
Flowering from June until September, it forms large clumps of upright, branched stems. Flowers are white, greenish and ethereal; petals surround umbels of small greenish flowers. A great favourite of gardeners and easy to grow. **N** Masterwort. **H** 60cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Any rich soil; sun or semi-shade. **SI** Late summer. **HR** USDA 5a-9b.

17 *BRUNNERA MACROPHYLLA* PERENNIAL
Very useful ground cover for shade. Has bright-blue, forget-me-not flowers in April and May. Large, heart-shaped, green leaves help suppress weeds in summer. Other varieties have foliage striped or spotted with white or cream. I prefer the simple green. **N** Siberian bugloss. **H** 45cm. **S** 60cm. **C** Any soil type but dislikes drying out in summer. **SI** Spring. **HR** USDA 3a-7b.

18 *BUXUS SEMPERVIRENS*
SHRUB/SMALL TREE Useful, small-leaved evergreen that provides essential structure to a garden. Often used for elaborate parterres, as hedges to frame summer annuals or as shaped specimens. Today, alas, prone to a fairly recently introduced box blight. **N** Common box. **H** 75cm-1.5m. **S** 60cm. **C** Well-drained, moderately fertile soil, best in full sun. **SI** Year round. **HR** USDA Zone 6a-8b.

19 *CAMASSIA ESCULENTA* BULB
Attractive, starry blue flowers borne on tall, stiff spikes rise above lax leaves. Often planted in the UK to extend the season of spring-flowering meadows. Naturalises well. **N** Quamash. **H** 1m. **S** 30cm. **C** Full sun and prefers moist, alkaline soil. **SI** Late spring.

20 *CARPINUS BETULUS* SHRUB/TREE
Other than English yew, hornbeam is the best plant for hedging to protect the garden or for creating garden 'rooms'. With smaller leaves than beech, it keeps its pale, dead foliage during the winter. Catkins in spring. Invaluable as a hedge, but can also grow into an elegant tree; an attractive fastigiate form makes a fine avenue. AGM. **N** Hornbeam. ▷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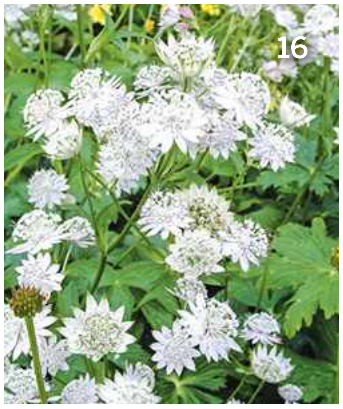
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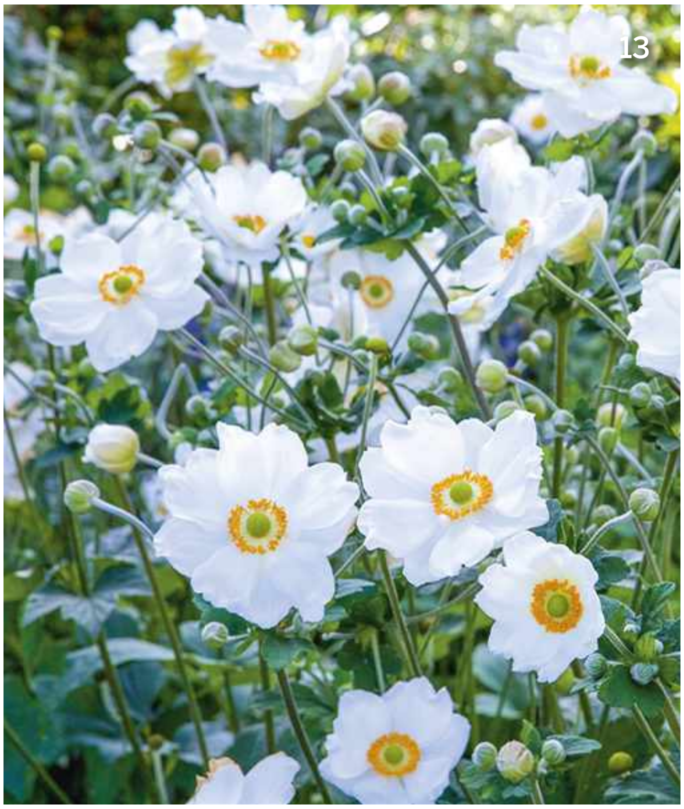
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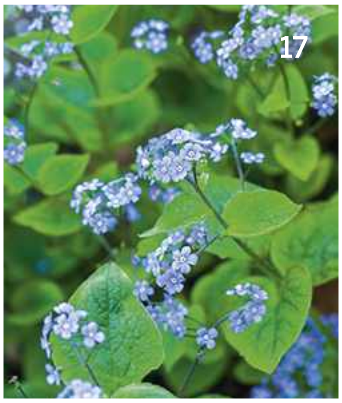
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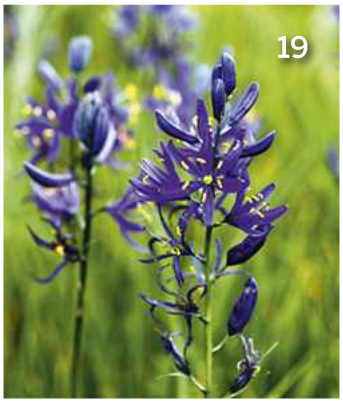
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12 MIRIAM HEPPELL / ALAMY. 13 MMGI / MARIANNE MAJERUS. 16 GARDEN WORLD IMAGES. 17 MMGI / MARIANNE MAJERUS. 19 JOSHUA McCULLOUGH / GETTY IMAGES

▷ **H** 2m. **S** 60cm. **C** Adaptable. Prefers sun but tolerates semi-shade and wet, even waterlogged clay soil. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

21 *CERCIDIPHYLLUM JAPONICUM* TREE
Elegant, deciduous, medium-sized tree with very small red flowers that appear before brilliant, bronze-red leaves in spring. The foliage colours to a startling red and orange in late autumn and smells of burnt sugar when crushed. AGM. **N** Katsura tree. **H** 20m. **S** 15m. **C** Although a woodland tree, it's happy in full sun in any soil type. **SI** Spring and autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

22 *CERCIS SILIQUASTRUM* 'BODNANT' TREE Small, slightly tender, spreading tree with heart-shaped, glaucous blue-green leaves appearing after vivid red and pink flower clusters in late spring (there is also a white-flowered form). Foliage turns pale yellow in autumn. AGM. **N** Judas tree. **H** 10m. **S** 10m. **C** Any soil but prefers a hot continental summer. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

23 *CHAMAENERION ANGUSTIFOLIUM* 'ALBUM' PERENNIAL
One of the most beautiful border plants, this fast-growing perennial has elegant, willow-like leaves that shelter green-tipped buds and green-white flowers. It spreads rapidly by underground runners but is so desirable that keeping it in check is worth the extra effort. Seeds germinate very rarely. It is admirable for flower arranging. **N** White rosebay willow herb. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1.5-2m underground. **C** Any well-drained soil in full sun. **SI** Summer.

Gardens benefit from a few small trees or large shrubs to contrast with the massed spring bulbs and seasonal perennials.

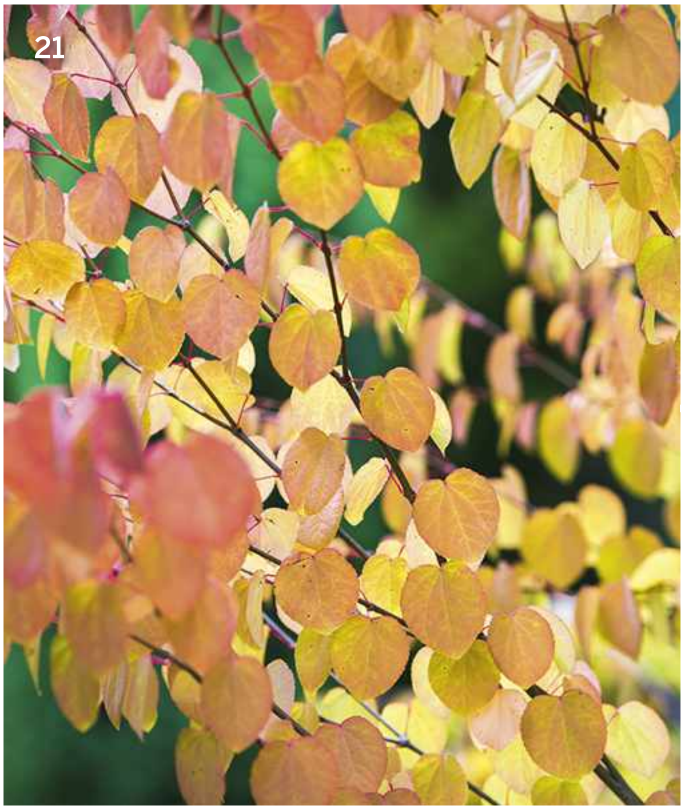
24 *CHIONODOXA SARDENSIS* PERENNIAL
Small, bulbous perennial related to scilla, its flowers are star-shaped, blue with paler centres. Plant in groups to scramble in gravelly soil or under deciduous shrubs and trees. Self-seeder. AGM. **N** Lesser glory of the snow. **H** 15cm. **S** 5cm. **C** Free-draining soil such as that found in a rockery. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

25 *CHOISYA TERNATA* SHRUB
Medium-sized, evergreen shrub that gives structure to borders and is a good bulky wall plant. Bears scented, white, star-shaped flowers above fragrant, shining, green leaves in spring or early summer, often again in autumn. A must in any garden. Admirable for picking for both flowers and foliage. AGM. **N** Mexican orange blossom. **H** 2.5m. **S** 2.5m. **C** Any fertile soil; definitely prefers shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

26 *CLEMATIS* 'APPLE BLOSSOM' CLIMBER
Evergreen climber for shade. Flowers on the previous year's shoots. Stunning, whitish-pink, sweetly scented blooms and attractive, glossy, lance-shaped leaves make this an essential plant for late winter and early spring interest. **H** 3-5m. **S** 2-3m. **C** Shade essential, needs good feeding. **SI** Early spring. **HR** USDA 7a-9b.

27 *CLEMATIS* 'PERLE D'AZUR' CLIMBER
Deciduous rambler with summer-autumn flowers produced on current year's shoots. The bell-shaped, azure-blue petals with creamy central anthers are carried very freely over a long period. Vigorous in annual growth, it will quickly cover a wall or scramble through a trellis to cover a pergola. **H** 3m. **S** 2m. **C** As with most clematis, it likes its roots in shade. Rich soil and mulch in winter. **SI** Summer. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

28 *CLEMATIS REHDERIANA* CLIMBER
A vigorous, deciduous clematis with fern-like leaves and panicles of charming, bell-like, pale-yellow flowers, sweetly scented of cowslips, followed by fluffy seedheads. May well self-seed in the garden. AGM. **N** Nodding virgin's bower. **H** 6-7m. **S** 3m. **C** Grow in any soil against shady wall. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b. ▷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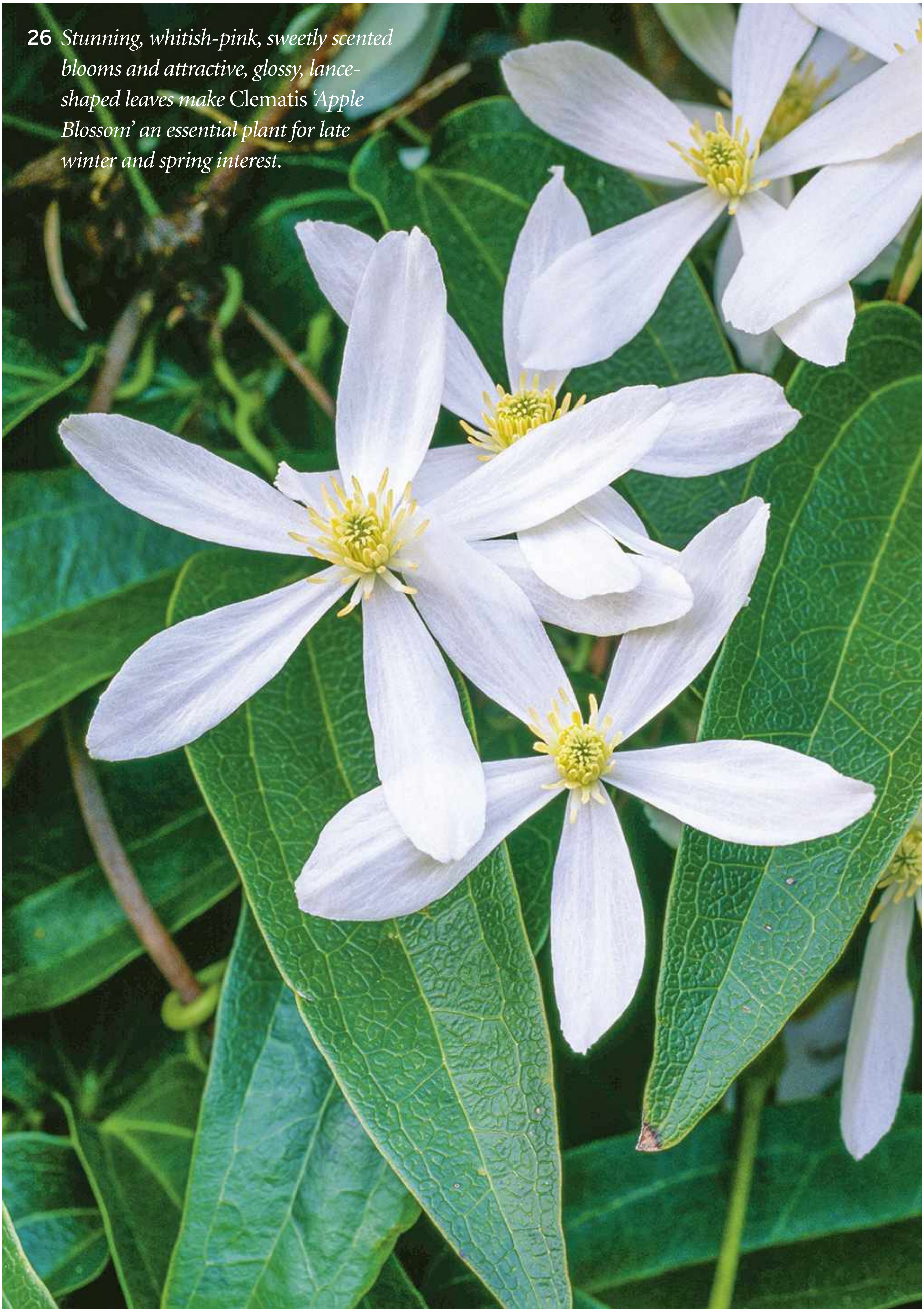

26 *Stunning, whitish-pink, sweetly scented blooms and attractive, glossy, lance-shaped leaves make* Clematis *'Apple Blossom' an essential plant for late winter and spring interest.*

26 CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS

▷ 29 *CLERODENDRUM TRICHOTOMUM* VAR. *FARGESII* SHRUB
Upright, bushy, deciduous shrub flowering from late summer into October. Leaves emerge bronze in spring turning green in summer. Highly fragrant flowers have green-white sepals, followed by bunched, bright-blue berries. AGM. **H** 6m. **S** 6m. **C** Full sun; shelter from wind. Protect when young. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H4.

***30 CRATAEGUS* X *LAVALLEEI* 'CARRIEREI'**
TREE Compact, semi-evergreen hawthorn with dark-green, glossy, toothed leaves. Good autumn colour. Corymbs of white flowers in early summer are followed by shiny orange-red fruit in autumn. AGM. **N** Hybrid cockspur thorn. **H** 7m. **S** 9m. **C** Sun, very robust in windy situations. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H6.

31 *CROCUS TOMMASINIANUS* BULB
Small, early crocus with silvery backed flowers, opening in sun to reveal lilac interior. Seeds freely. One of the best for naturalising. AGM. **H** 10cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Any soil, full sun. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

32 *DAPHNE BHOLUA* 'JACQUELINE POSTILL'
SHRUB A semi-evergreen, medium-sized, winter-flowering shrub with leathery leaves and intensely fragrant, deep-purple and white flowers held in terminal clusters. Best grown in a sheltered site. AGM. **N** Nepalese paper plant. **H** 2-4m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Semi-woodland. Any soil type. **SI** Late winter. **HR** RHS H4.

33 *DAPHNE PONTICA* SHRUB
Small, spreading evergreen suitable for under a north-facing wall. Glossy, dark leaves frame pairs of fragrant, yellow-green flowers early in the year. Good in a dark corner. Resents transplanting. AGM. **N** Twin-flowered daphne. **H** 1m. **S** 2m. **C** Shade in humus-rich, alkaline soil. **SI** Early spring. **HR** USDA 6a-9b.

34 *ELAEAGNUS ANGUSTIFOLIA*
SHRUB/TREE Medium-sized, with deciduous willow-like, silver-grey leaves and pendulous yellow flowers. Its value lies in its use as contrasting grey foliage colour among green neighbours and bright flowers. A suckering form, 'Quicksilver', is even more impressive but subject to unexpected dieback in summer. AGM. **N** Russian olive. **H** 6m. **S** 6m. **C** Fertile, well-drained soil in full sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

35 *ERANTHIS HYEMALIS* PERENNIAL
A clump-forming, tuberous perennial that should be massed under a deciduous tree for February pleasure. Its shining yellow flowers appear above a ruff of dissected green leaves. AGM. **N** Winter aconite. **H** 8cm. **S** 5cm. **C** Alkaline soil. Plant in short grass under deciduous trees. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H5.

36 *ERYNGIUM GIGANTEUM*
BIENNIAL/SHORT-LIVED PERENNIAL This much-loved, thistle-like plant loves heat. Will happily self-seed to create its own permanent colony. Tap-rooted, with spiny stems and toothed, grey-green leaves, it has greeny-blue flowers framed by silvery bracts. AGM. **N** Miss Willmott's ghost. **H** 1m. **S** 30cm. **C** Full sun. Grow in gravel to encourage seeding. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H7.

37 *ERYSIMUM* 'BOWLES'S MAUVE'
PERENNIAL Vigorous, short-lived evergreen wall flower that may survive several years. Desirable, especially in a new garden. Its bushy, grey-green leaves frame racemes of rich mauve flowers. Long-flowering. AGM. **N** Wallflower. **H** 70cm. **S** 60cm. **C** Needs frequent tidying but worth the effort. Any soil but not too rich. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H4.

38 *ESCALLONIA* 'APPLE BLOSSOM' SHRUB
Slow-growing evergreen shrub, one of the hardiest of the genus, with attractive pink and white flowers. Can be planted as a trim hedge or will grow taller against a warm wall. AGM. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1m. **C** Any soil type, full sun. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 8a-9b.

39 *EUPHORBIA AMYGDALOIDES* VAR. *ROBBIAE* PERENNIAL
Excellent early flowering ground cover for under taller deciduous trees or shrubs. Green

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leaves and yellow flowers heads. Spreading roots and vigorous growth. Deadhead after flowering. **N** Mrs Robb's bonnet. **H** 60cm. **S** Spreads quickly by rhizomes. **C** Moist soil and shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** USDA 6a-8b.

40 *EUPHORBIA CHARACIAS* SUBSP. *WULFENII* 'JOHN TOMLINSON' PERENNIAL
Small evergreen with handsome grey-green foliage. Narrow spikes hold almost spherical greenish-yellow flower heads. An essential plant for a spring garden; although not long lived it will seed readily to give replacements. AGM. **N** Spurge. **H** 1m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Full sun and good drainage. Plant with gravel. Cut back after flowering. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8a-11.

41 *EUPATORIUM MACULATUM* ATROPURPUREUM GROUP 'RIESENSCHIRM' PERENNIAL
Indispensable architectural plant with tall stems bearing flat-topped inflorescences in reddish-purple. Welcome relief from Michaelmas daisies. Ideal for borders of dusky colours. Clumps up quickly. AGM. **N** Joe Pye weed. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1m. **C** Prefers alkaline, moist soil. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H6.

42 *FRANCOA SONCHIFOLIA* ROGERSON'S FORM PERENNIAL
Wavy, evergreen leaves and arching stems of dark pink flower heads, followed by attractive seedheads. **N** Bridal wreath. **H** Leaves 8cm, flower spikes 60cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Needs winter protection. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H4.

> *Less is more. Simplify the designs and limit your range of plants by repetition in different areas rather than expanding the choice of favourites*

43 *FRITILLARIA MELEAGRIS* PERENNIAL
Bulbous, herbaceous perennial best grown in a marshy meadow but also lovely under deciduous trees and shrubs. Pendent, bell-shaped flowers of chequered pinkish-purple. AGM. **N** Snake's head fritillary. **H** 30cm. **S** 8cm. **C** Fertile soil in sun. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

44 *GALANTHUS ELWESII* BULB
Robust snowdrop with twisted glaucous leaves and large, fragrant, white flowers marked with green on inner tepals. A spreader in light woodland. AGM. **N** Greater snowdrop. **H** 15cm. **S** 8cm. **C** Any rich soil. **SI** Winter – spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

45 *GERANIUM NODOSUM* PERENNIAL
Sprawling herbaceous perennial with spreading roots. Bright-green, glossy leaves and mauve flowers from late spring to mid autumn. Very effective ground cover. Seeds freely. **N** Knotted crane's bill. **H** 50cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Any soil, prefers dry shade. **SI** Spring – summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.

46 *GERANIUM PALMATUM* PERENNIAL
Tap-rooted, evergreen perennial from Madeira. Borderline-hardy. Magnificent foliage combines with trusses of pale-purple flowers in late spring. An ornament for the garden and a prolific seeder. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Sun or semi-shade. Not reliably hardy so save autumn seedlings in a frame. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 9b-11.

47 *GERANIUM* ROZANNE (= 'GERWAT')
PERENNIAL Dazzling, hardy geranium with deeply cut green leaves in loose clusters and violet-purple flowers. A must for any garden, either at front of a border or massed as ground cover. AGM. **N** Rozanne's cranesbill. **H** 50cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Any moist soil. Cut back if wilting in hot weather. **SI** Summer – October. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

48 *GLADIOLUS MURIELAE* PERENNIAL
For the more ambitious, as the corms are tender and need storing over winter. Lovely grown in pots planted in spring or dug into a border. Scented and very elegant with tall stems bearing hooded, funnel-shaped, pure-white flowers with purple slash. AGM. **H** 70cm. **S** 5cm. **C** Tender so dry off corms in winter. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H3.

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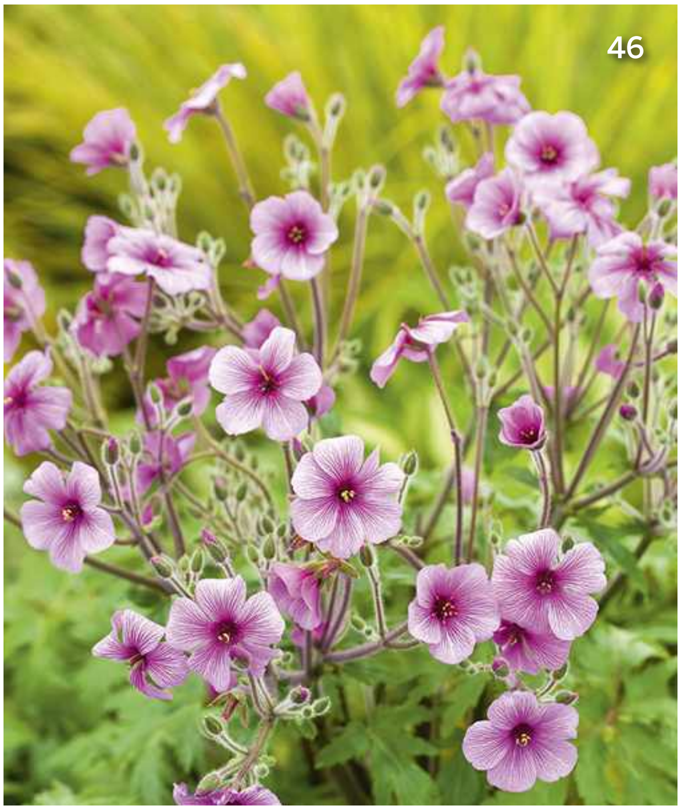
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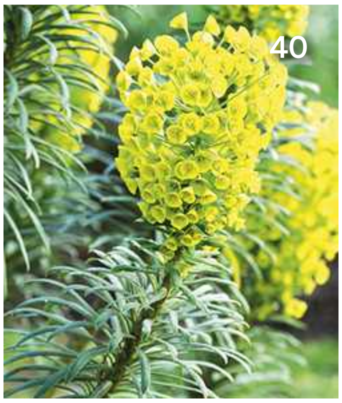
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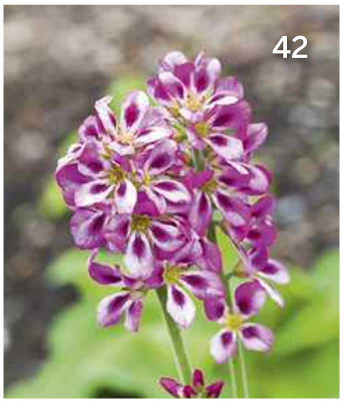
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▷ **49 *HELLEBORUS* X *HYBRIDUS* ‘PLUTO’**
PERENNIAL An early spring perennial with leathery, deeply lobed leaves and small, deep-purple, cup-shaped, nodding flowers. **H** 30cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Neutral soil, in sun or shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5.

50 *HELLEBORUS* X *STERNII* PERENNIAL
Herbaceous, shrubby hellebore with a leafy stem that produces flowers the following year. Combines attributes of both parents (*H. argutifolius* x *H. lividus*) and has nodding, rosy-green flowers. **H** 35cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Rich soil; borderline hardy. **SI** Winter – spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

51 *HEMEROCALLIS LILIOASPHODELUS*
PERENNIAL Formerly called *H. flava*, this is one of the best daylilies as it’s far less of a thug than many others. Produces very early, scented flowers of clear, bright yellow among spiky leaves. Good under tall shrubs. **N** Custard daylily. **H** 1m. **S** 1m. **C** Easy to grow in any soil. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.

52 *HEPTACODIUM MICONIOIDES* SHRUB
Introduced recently from China, this is a very useful large, bushy, late-flowering upright shrub for structure, flowers and seedheads. Creamy-white, fragrant flowers followed, in a hot climate, by persistent ornamental red sepals. AGM. **H** 4m. **S** 3m. **C** Any soil but full sun. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

> *Choose gentle colour harmonies as well as contrasting hues for quick effects. Green is a colour too, so think of foliage.*

53 *HOHERIA SEXSTYLOSA* ‘STARDUST’
SHRUB Upright evergreen from New Zealand. Its lance-shaped, toothed leaves are attractive all year, while the mass of white, cup-shaped, fragrant flowers is a very welcome sight in July at a time when few shrubs perform. AGM. **N** Ribbonwood. **H** 8m. **S** 6m. **C** Prefers a maritime climate but will thrive against a warm protective wall. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

54 *HYDRANGEA PANICULATA* ‘LIMELIGHT’
SHRUB Sturdy, medium-sized, branched shrub with sterile, soft-green florets that turn to creamy white and then pink tones as the season progresses. Prune hard in spring to increase size of flowers. AGM. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Prefers a moist, well-drained soil that is moderately fertile. Full sun or dappled shade. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

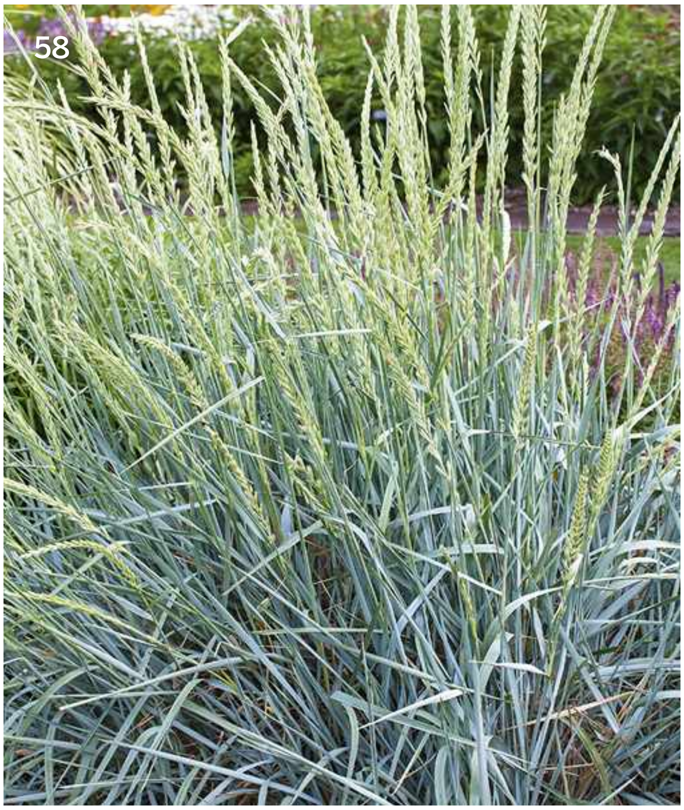
55 *HYDRANGEA SEEMANNII* CLIMBER
Evergreen hydrangea that clings to walls by aerial roots and has lance-shaped, serrated leaves. In summer it bears large round inflorescences made up of very attractive greenish-white fertile flowers surrounded by white infertile corymbs. Needs a shady corner in a warm garden. **SI** Summer. **H** 10m. **S** 5m. **C** Any soil but plant in shade. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8a-10a.

56 *KOLKWITZIA AMABILIS* ‘PINK CLOUD’
SHRUB A very desirable and easy deciduous suckering shrub with masses of small, bell-shaped, pale to deep pink flowers with yellow throats. An old favourite. AGM. **N** Beauty bush. **H** 3m. **S** 3m. **C** Plant in any soil in full sun or semi-shade. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H5.

57 *LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA* ‘HIDCOTE’
PERENNIAL This grey-leaved, compact shrub with dark-blue flowers is the best lavender for any garden. Attractive to bees, it needs careful pruning after flowering. AGM. **N** Lavender. **H** 60cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Well-drained soil or gravel, full sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-11.

58 *LEYMUS ARENARIUS* GRASS
Its silvery-grey leaves provide airy colour for year-round enjoyment. It’s a great invader so best contained in a wide, ornamental pot. **N** Lyme grass. **H** 1m. **S** By runners any distance over a period. **C** Any sandy soil. **SI** Year round. **HR** USDA 4a-9b.

59 *LILIUM REGALE* BULB
A very reliable flowerer with creamy fragrant blooms flushed with purple and carried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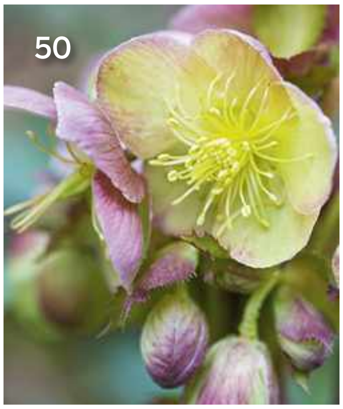
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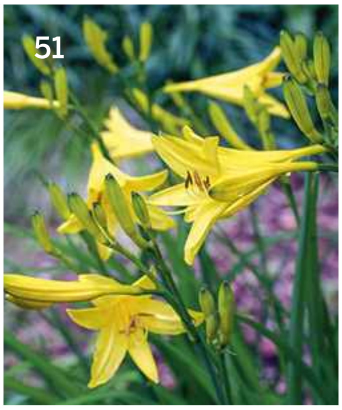
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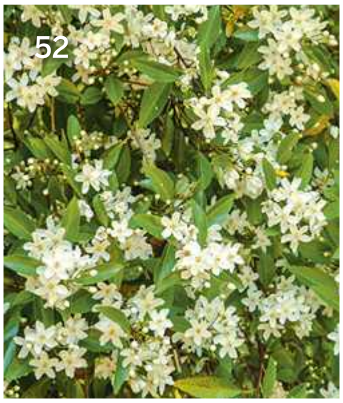
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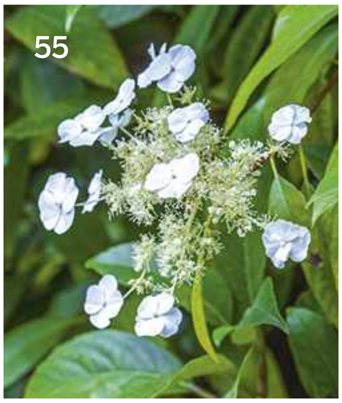
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50 JULIE DANSEREAU / GAP PHOTOS, 51 MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GARDEN WORL DIMAGES, 52 TONY COOPER / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES, 55 MARIANNE MAJERUS / MMGI, 58 BOTANIC IMAGES INC. / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

on tall stems. Stem rooting. Long lasting and good for picking. AGM. **N** Royal lily. **H** 1m. **C** Fertile soils (not too alkaline), feed after flowering. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

60 *LOBELIA X SPECIOSA* 'HADSPEN PURPLE' PERENNIAL
A clump-forming plant with dark-purple flowers held above dark-green leaves. A good choice for semi-shade, and works well when associated with similar dusky colours. **H** 1.2m. **S** 30cm. **C** Any rich fertile moist soil, sun or semi-shade. **SI** Late summer.

61 *LOBELIA TUPA* PERENNIAL
A most desirable perennial, but one for more adventurous gardeners. Brick-red to orange flowers atop red-purple stems and soft grey-green, downy leaves. I grow in containers and give it shelter. Some books say it is robust but I doubt it. Deserves a medal. **N** Devil's tobacco. **H** 1m. **S** 15cm. **C** Fertile soil full sun. Keep dry in winter. **SI** Summer. **HR** USDA 8a-10b.

62 *LONICERA TRAGOPHYLLA* CLIMBER
A woody, deciduous, twining honeysuckle, with good-sized, bright-yellow to orange tubular flowers from June to July. These are followed by red berries. Unusual in that it enjoys a bit of shade. AGM. **N** Chinese honeysuckle. **H** 6m. **S** 2m. **C** Any soil in sun or semi-shade. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H5.

63 *LYSIMACHIA EPHEMERUM* PERENNIAL
Very useful late-flowerer with an elegant upright habit. Stem-clasping, grey-green leaves set off upright, densely packed whitish-green flowers in terminal racemes. Has a reputation for being tender in exposed sites. AGM. **N** Willow-leaved loosestrife. **H** 1m. **S** 30cm. **C** Undemanding in sun or semi-shade. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H6.

64 *LYSIMACHIA NUMMULARIA* 'AUREA'
PERENNIAL Prostrate, creeping evergreen with bright, golden-yellow leaves. Perfect for flat ground cover, quickly spreading as a mat under shrubs. A very useful plant for a dark corner. The abundant, single, bright-yellow flowers are unimportant. AGM. **N** Golden creeping Jenny. **H** 5cm. **C** Very ordinary soil and semi-shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5.

65 *LYTHRUM SALICARIA* 'FEUERKERZE'
PERENNIAL Erect, stiff, clump-forming plant with tall spikes of purple-red to pink flowers. Best grown in moist soil beside a stream. AGM. **N** Purple loosestrife. **H** 1m. **S** 45cm. **C** Grow in any moist soil in full sun. Can be grown as a bog plant. **SI** Midsummer to early autumn. **HR** RHS H7.

66 *MAGNOLIA WILSONII* SHRUB/TREE
A very attractive, deciduous shrub or small tree bearing highly scented, pendent, cup-shaped, white flowers with crimson stamens. Leaves, held on purple shoots, are green with felted brown on undersides. Grow on a bank to appreciate blooms from below. AGM. **H** 6m. **S** 6m. **C** Tolerant of both acid and alkaline soil. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H6.

67 *MALUS HUPEHENSIS* SMALL TREE
For me, the best of the crab apples. A natural-shaped, spreading deciduous tree with fragrant, white flowers opening from pink buds followed by cherry-like red fruit. AGM. **N** Crab apple. **H** 12m. **S** 12m. **C** Grow in fertile, moist but well-drained soil in sun. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H6.

68 *MOLINIA CAERULEA* SUBSP. *ARUNDINACEA* 'TRANSPARENT' GRASS
A deciduous, autumn-flowering grass with an open habit and beautiful, airy effect in late summer. Green flowers fade to purple-brown and later golden-yellow. **N** Purple moor grass. **H** 2m. **S** 1m. **C** Moist but well-drained soil, preferably acid. **SI** Autumn.

69 *NARCISSUS* 'THALIA' BULB
Multi-headed, trumpet daffodil from the triandrus group. Has lovely, scented, pure-white, simple flowers at a time when the countryside is overwhelmed by massed plantings of bright, golden daffodils. A perfect contrast. **H** 35cm. **S** 8cm. **C** Any soil with sun. Keep soil moist, do not cut down leaves for six weeks. **SI** Late spring. **HR** USDA 5a-11.

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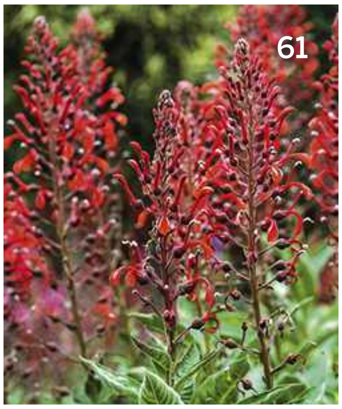
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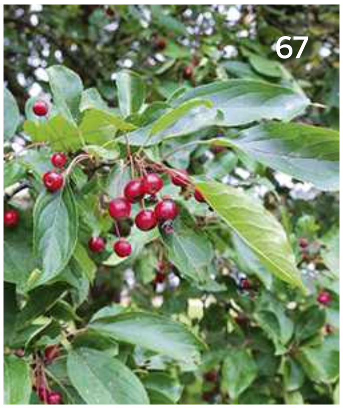
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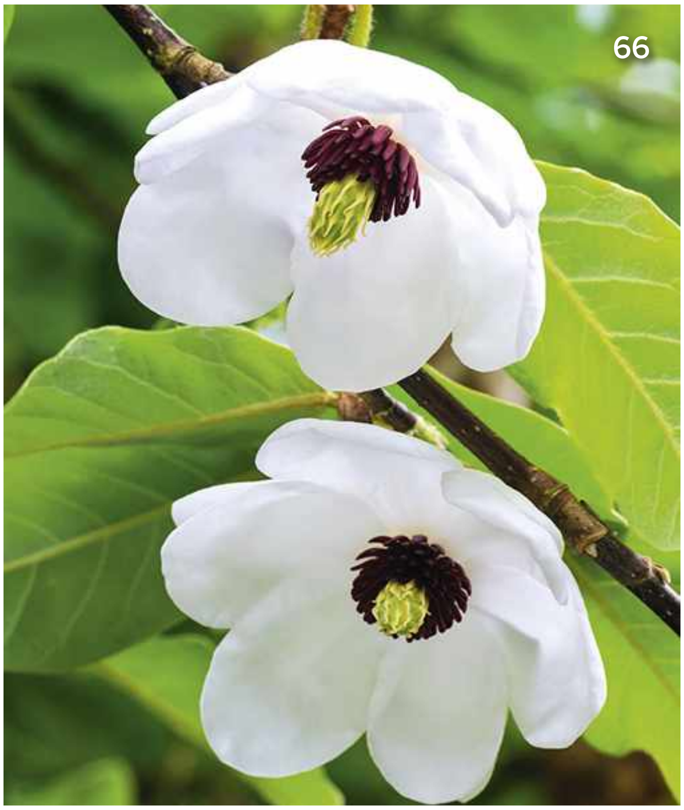
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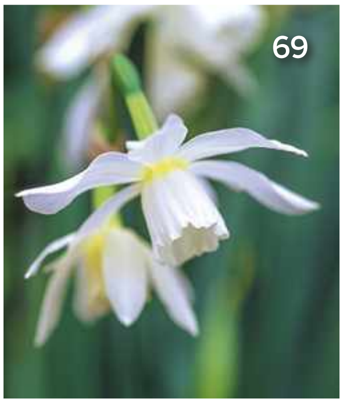
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61 NICOLA STOCKEN TOMKINS / THE GARDEN COLLECTION, 66 J S SIRA / GAP PHOTOS,
67 AJTFOTO / ALAMY, 68 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS, 69 TORIE CHUGG, THE GARDEN COLLECTION

▷ **70 *NICOTIANA LANGSDORFFII***
HALF-HARDY ANNUAL A delightful, lower-growing tobacco plant with branching stems and sprays of unusual, subtle apple-green, drooping, tubular bell-like flowers. Long flowering. AGM. **N** Tobacco plant. **H** 1.5m. **S** 35cm. **C** Any rich soil. Feed during flowering. **SI** Summer to autumn.

71 *NICOTIANA MUTABILIS* ANNUAL
Tall, branched, bushy annual that flowers into the autumn. Showers of pink and white trumpet-shaped flowers are carried on long, branched stems. Satisfactory container plant. Collect your own seed. **N** Tobacco plant. **H** 2m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Any rich soil, feed in container. **SI** Summer to autumn. **HR** USDA 8a-10b.

72 *OLEARIA MACRODONTA* SHRUB
Pale-green, glossy, evergreen, holly-like leaves support daisy-like corymbs of white flowers. A substantial and valuable woody shrub. One of the hardiest of daisy bushes. AGM. **N** Daisy bush. **H** 6m. **S** 5m. **C** Can be a hedge or wind break in milder areas. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H4.

73 *OLEARIA* X *OLEIFOLIA* 'WAIKARIENSIS'
SHRUB A very attractive, small, hybrid bush with silvery-grey leaves and white flowers in axillary clusters. Very floriferous. Best if deadheaded after flowering. **N** Daisy bush. **H** 1.2m. **S** 2m. **C** Protect with fleece in first winter. Give warm sunny site. **SI** Summer.

Plan for an overall effect and ease of maintenance. A garden should reflect unity and design as well as horticultural know-how.

74 *PAEONIA LACTIFLORA* 'BOWL OF BEAUTY' PERENNIAL
An understandably popular peony with beautiful, wide, pink flowers with extraordinary centres packed with creamy-white petaloids and mid-green leaves. Good for picking as a cut flower. AGM. **H** 1m. **S** 1m. **C** Full sun and fertile soil. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 2a-8b.

75 *PAEONIA MLOKOSEWITSCHII*
PERENNIAL An exceptionally beautiful species peony that grows wild in the Caucasus Mountains. One of the earliest peonies to flower with wide, bowl-shaped, pale-yellow blooms and golden anthers held above attractive blue-grey leaves. Very desirable. AGM. **N** Molly the witch. **H** 90cm. **S** 1m. **C** Provide good drainage and mulch for winter protection. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

76 *PAPAVER SOMNIFERUM* ANNUAL
Rewarding and trouble-free annual. Happily self-seeds or seeds can be scattered directly into garden soil in early spring. Grey prostrate leaves germinate early, followed by attractive papery flowers in white, pale pinks or deeper maroon. Double opium poppies known as peony-flowered are available in rich shades. **N** Opium poppy. **H** 1.2m. **S** 30cm. **C** Prefers a dry, well-drained position; full sun. **SI** Summer.

77 *PHILADELPHUS* 'BELLE ÉTOILE' SHRUB
Best philadelphus for the average-sized garden. Arching, deciduous, trouble-free shrub with single, very fragrant, cup-shaped white flowers with pink-flushed centres. AGM. **N** Mock orange. **H** 1.2m. **S** 2.5m. **C** Well-drained soil in full sun or semi-shade. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-10b.

78 *PHILLYREA LATIFOLIA* SHRUB/ TREE
I plant this valuable evergreen for garden structure, either as a freestanding plant or as single plants in a formal avenue. It can be clipped into smooth, shining domes, its glossy leaves reflecting light. **N** Mock privet. **H** 9m. **S** 9m. **C** Tender when young so choose a sheltered spot with full sun and well-drained soil. **SI** Year round. **HR** USDA 7b-9a.

79 *PHLOMIS FRUTICOSA* SHRUB
A spring-flowering evergreen shrub with soft silvery-grey leaves and pale-yellow, scented flowers. A winner for early structure and flower interest. Its blooms are curious twisted whorls. AGM. **N** Jerusalem sage. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Give a sheltered site in full sun and dry soil. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-11. ▷

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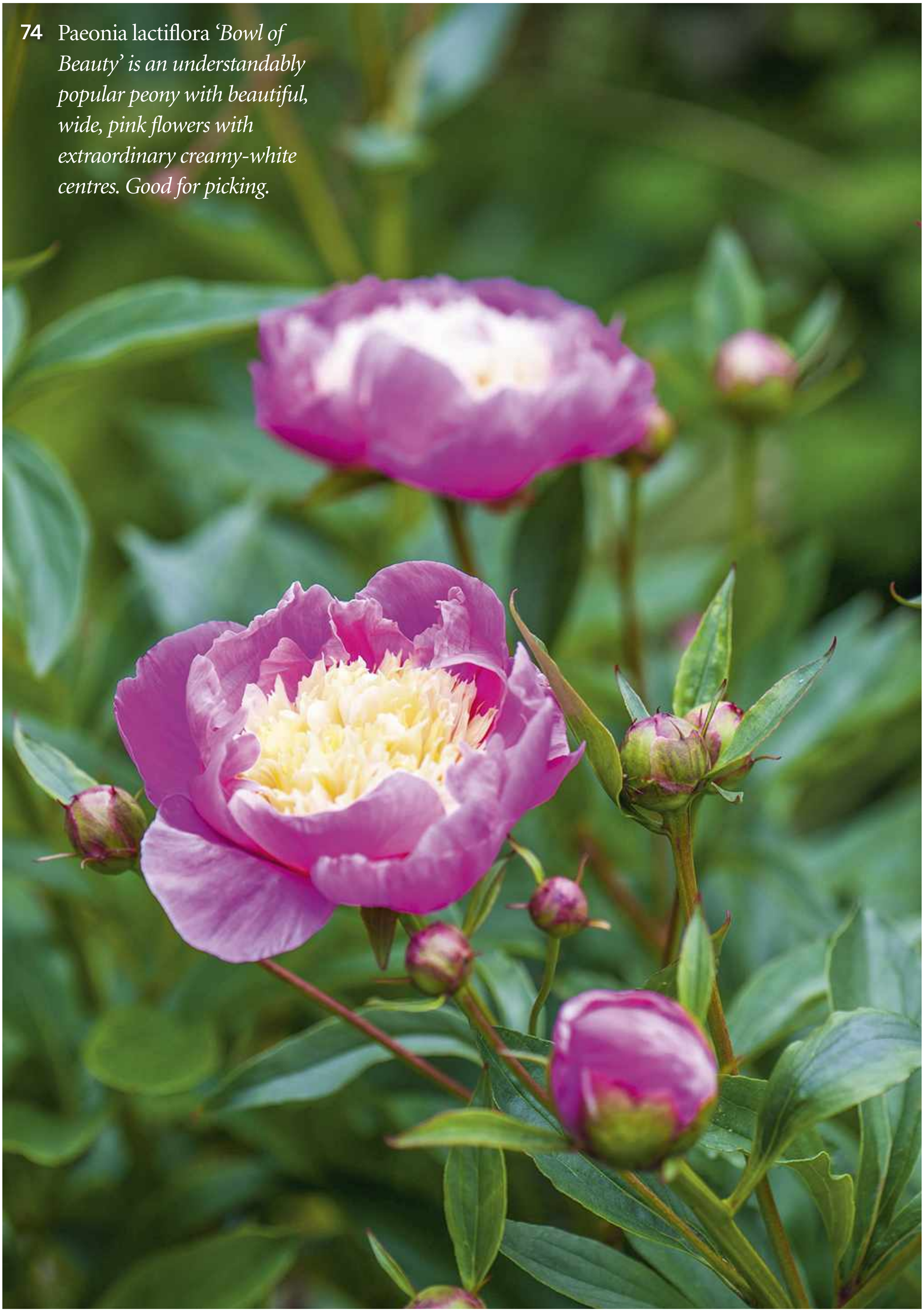
70 DENI BOWN / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES. 72 MARIANNE MAJERUS / MMGI. 75 OXSHOT / ALAMY. 76 VASILIY VISHNEVSKIY / ALAMY. 77 TREVOR SIMS / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES



74 Paeonia lactiflora *'Bowl of Beauty' is an understandably popular peony with beautiful, wide, pink flowers with extraordinary creamy-white centres. Good for picking.*

74 RACHEL CHAPPELL / GAP PHOTOS

▷ **80 *PITTOSPORUM TOBIRA*** SHRUB
Evergreen with shiny leaves and very fragrant, handsome, white umbels. Here in Somerset it thrives in a sheltered corner against a warm wall. Protect with fleece in winter. AGM. **N** Japanese mock orange. **H** 2-10m. **S** 2.5m. **C** Well-drained soil. **SI** Spring to early summer. **HR** RHS H3, USDA 8a-10b.

81 *POLYGONATUM* X *HYBRIDUM*
PERENNIAL An old favourite with arching green stems bearing ovate leaves and green-tipped, dangling white tubular flowers. AGM. **N** Common Solomon's seal. **H** 1.5m. **S** 30cm. **C** Any soil in shade. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H7.

82 *PRUNUS* X *SUBHIRTELLA* 'AUTUMNALIS'
TREE The perfect tree with semi-double pinkish white flowers first in November and then intermittently all winter. Green leaves colour yellow in October before dropping. **N** Winter cherry. **H** 8m. **S** 8m. **C** Shelter from wind, any soil type. Woodland margin. **SI** Winter. **HR** USDA 5a-9b.

83 *ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA* 'UMBRACULIFERA' TREE
Lollypop shaped with a tall stem, this is ideal for defining garden areas or simple avenues. Quite large plants will grow beneath its canopy. Cut back annually as it matures. **N** Mop-head acacia. **H** 6m. **S** 6m. **C** Any soil, protect from wind. **SI** Spring to autumn. **HR** USDA 5a-9b.

> *Keep some space against a warm wall for a few tender shrubs. Exotics will give your garden an edge.*

84 *ROSA* GERTRUDE JEKYLL (= 'AUSBORD')
SHRUB ROSE One of David Austin's repeat-flowering English roses. Large rosette-shaped blooms with a rich, pink colour and true rose fragrance. Forms an upright, compact shrub which is vigorous, reliable and free flowering. Good for picking. AGM. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1m. **C** Rich, manured soil. Feed generously. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-10a.

85 *SALVIA INVOLUCRATA* PERENNIAL
One of the best salvias for its long and prolific flowering. Attractive pink and red buds open into deeper red flowers. Very garden-worthy but needs space. Benefits from a protective mulch. AGM. **N** Rosy-leaf sage. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Well-drained soil and shelter in full sun. **SI** Late summer to first frosts. **HR** USDA 7b-11.

86 *SALVIA NEMOROSA* 'CARADONNA'
PERENNIAL With striking, violet-blue flowers on dark stems, this ordinary salvia clumps up well. Perfectly hardy, needs little attention and is easily divided after a few years. AGM. **H** 90cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Full sun and good rich soil. Mulch in winter. **SI** Late spring. **HR** RHS H7.

87 *SARCOCOCCA CONFUSA* SHRUB
This shade-loving, bushy evergreen with incredibly fragrant, white flower clusters in deepest winter really raises one's spirits after Christmas. Black fruits extend its season. AGM. **N** Sweet box. **H** 2m. **S** 1m. **C** Sheltered spot under trees or taller deciduous shrubs. Any soil. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

88 *SOLANUM CRISPUM* 'GLASNEVIN'
CLIMBER A very vigorous, scrambling, semi-evergreen, woody climber that bears rich purple-blue potato flowers in late summer. Needs support on a trellis or pergola. AGM. **H** 8m. **S** 3m. **C** Alkaline soil in sun or semi-shade. Prune in spring. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 9a-11.

89 *SOLANUM LAXUM* 'ALBUM' CLIMBER
A very graceful, twining plant for mild areas, on a south or southwest-facing wall. Pale, almost white flowers borne in late season. I always protect its roots in winter. AGM. **N** Potato vine. **H** 6m. **S** 4m. **C** Plant at base of warm wall. **SI** Late summer. **HR** RHS H4.

90 *STAUNTONIA HEXAPHYLLA* CLIMBER
A strong-growing, tender, twining, evergreen shrub with large lax leaves bearing fragrant white flowers in spring. These are bell-shaped and white, tinged with violet. **N** Stauntonia vine. **H** 10m. **S** 5m. **C** Tender but unfussy about soil. **SI** Spring. **HR** USDA 8b-9b.

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80 JOSHUA McCULLOUGH / GETTY IMAGES, 81 CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS, 82 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS,
84 SABINA RÜBER / GAP PHOTOS, 88 DAVE ZUBRASKI / GAP PHOTOS

91 *STIPA GIGANTEA* GRASS
Spiky leaves and golden, oat-like flower heads by late summer. Grow more than one and make sure they are outlined against the setting sun. AGM. **N** Giant feather grass or golden oats. **H** 2.5m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Full sun and sheltered from high winds. Well-drained soil. **SI** Summer into autumn. **HR** RHS H7.

92 *SYRINGA VULGARIS* 'ANDENKEN AN LUDWIG SPÄTH' SHRUB
A reliable, tree-like, deciduous shrub bearing fragrant, deep wine-red flowers on slender 30cm-long panicles. Can be grown in a shrub border or as a specimen. AGM. **N** Lilac. **H** 7m. **S** 7m. **C** Well-drained sandy soil. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

93 *TAXUS BACCATA* SHRUB/TREE
Yew can be grown as a specimen, a hedge or topiarised into shapes. Evergreen with dark-green leaves and compact growth, it is the most valuable and lovable plant in the garden. AGM. **N** English yew. **H** Over 12m. **S** Over 8m. **C** Tolerates dry soil, hates swamps; happy in sun or shade. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5b-8b.

94 *TULIPA TURKESTANICA* BULB
In spring, grey-green leaves protect flowers, which are white with yellow centres, flushed grey and pink outside, and are borne on lax stems. AGM. **H** 30m. **S** 15cm. **C** Best in full sun planted in a rockery type bed or in a container. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.

95 *VERBENA BONARIENSIS* PERENNIAL
An invaluable plant that likes to seed itself in any corner. Upright, wiry, tall, branched stems produce lilac-purple, flat-headed panicles. AGM. **H** 2m. **S** 45cm. **C** Any fertile soil in sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

96 *VIBURNUM* X *BODNANTENSE* 'DAWN' SHRUB Dark-green to bronze leaves in summer. It produces highly scented frost-resistant pink flowers on bare branches from late autumn to spring. AGM. **N** Arrowwood. **H** 3m. **S** 1m. **C** Prefers shade, likes fertile soil. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5b-9b.

97 *VIBURNUM* X *BURKWOODII* 'ANNE RUSSELL' SHRUB
Semi-evergreen, bushy shrub producing fragrant, pink-budded white flowers from February to May. Best against a wall in a sheltered corner. **H** 2m. **S** 3m. **C** Any well-drained soil in sun. **SI** Early spring.

98 *VIBURNUM TINUS* 'EVE PRICE' SHRUB
Luxurious, evergreen, glossy green leaves and flower cymes in carmine and pink. Bears its flowers between autumn and spring. Can be grown as a thick, bushy hedge. AGM **N** Laurustinus. **H** 3m. **S** 3m. **C** Shady, moist soil. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

99 *VINCA MINOR ATROPURPUREA* PERENNIAL This creeping evergreen is very attractive as ground cover, with long rooting stems. It has dark, plum-purple flowers. Happy to grow under trees or shrubs and most effective if massed. AGM. **N** Lesser periwinkle. **H** 10-20cm. **S** 2m. **SI** Spring – summer. **C** Any soil in shade. **HR** RHS H6.

100 *WISTERIA FLORIBUNDA* 'ALBA CLIMBER White wisteria are hard to beat for elegance and this one from Japan has long, fragrant, white flowers gently tinted lilac. Carries velvet seed pods. A woody climber, it is perfect to train against a sunny wall. AGM. **N** White Japanese wisteria. **H** 9m. **C** Provide strong supports and prune carefully. **SI** Spring to summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b. □

Reader offer

To buy a selection of Penelope Hobhouse's recommended plants at a 10 per cent discount from Hortus Loci/plantify.co.uk, please **turn to page 109**.

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Talk

Penelope Hobhouse, along with fellow designers Jinny Blom and Sarah Price will be in conversation at this year's GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Talk, at the Royal Geographical Society on Tuesday 19 May 2015. For details, please **turn to page 10**.

90 ANDREA JONES / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES, 94 MMGI / MARIANNE MAJERUS, 96 STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY, 99 GEOFF KIDD / GAP PHOTOS, 100 SINE CHESTERMAN / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

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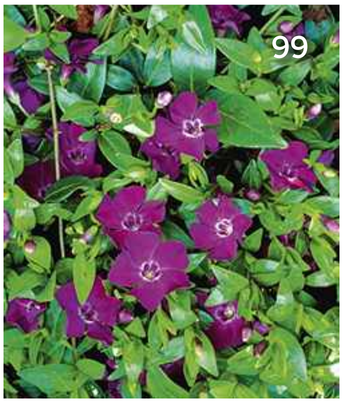
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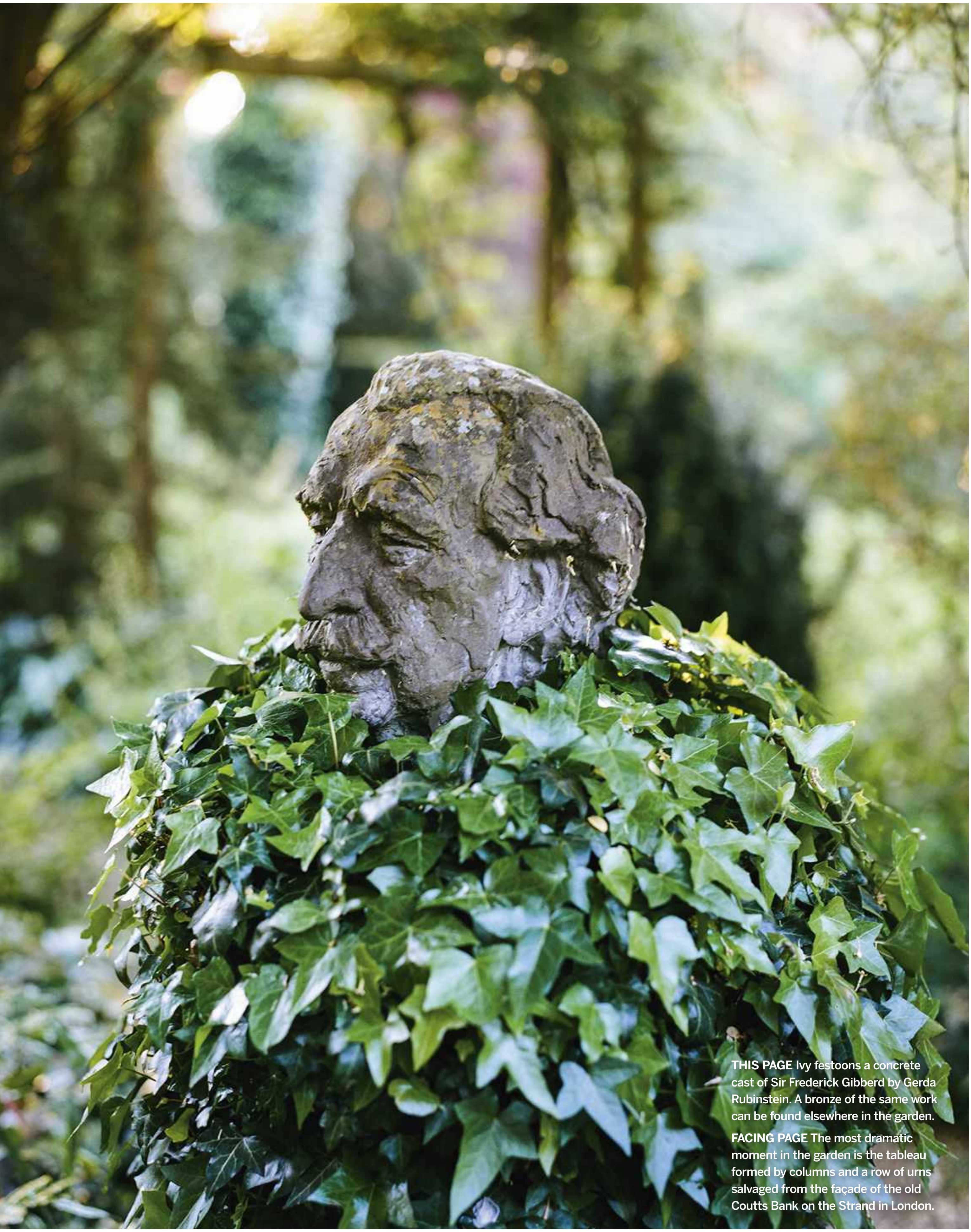
A work of art

Modernist architect and town planner Sir Frederick Gibberd put as much effort into his private garden as he did his buildings and public spaces, using sculpture to add interest and form

WORDS **TIM RICHARDSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **CRAIG FORDHAM**

In brief

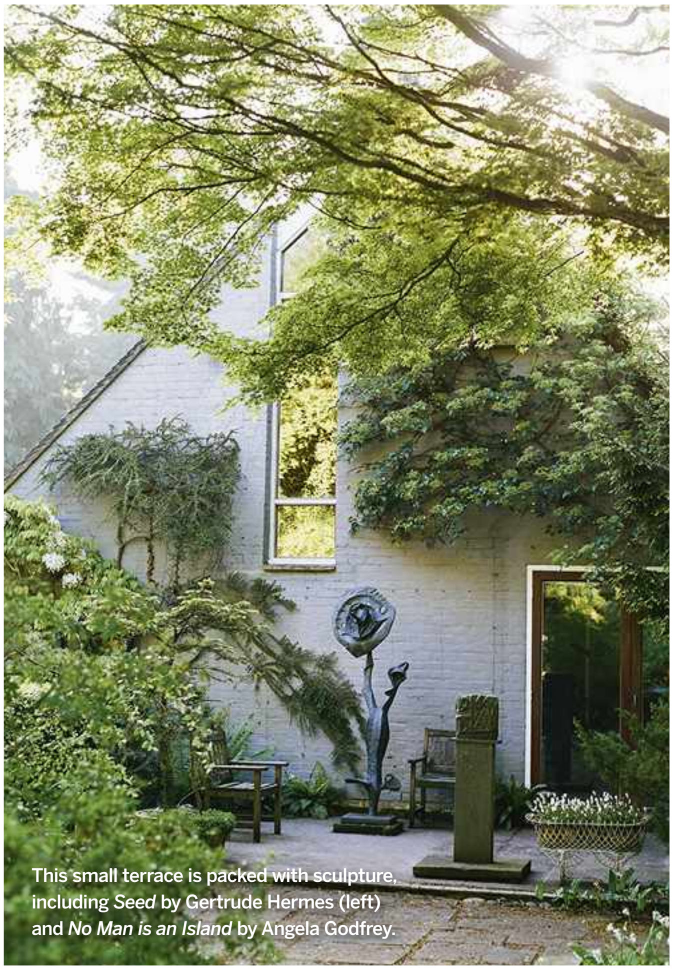
What Sculpture garden, designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd.
Where Harlow, Essex.
Points of interest Interlocking sculptural episodes and vistas.
Size Nine acres.
Soil Clay.
Climate Strong southwest winds.
Hardiness rating USDA 8a-9b.



THIS PAGE Ivy festoons a concrete cast of Sir Frederick Gibberd by Gerda Rubinstein. A bronze of the same work can be found elsewhere in the garden.

FACING PAGE The most dramatic moment in the garden is the tableau formed by columns and a row of urns salvaged from the façade of the old Coutts Bank on the Strand in London.

A formal lawn, surrounded by hedges and soft planting, at the front of the house. A domestic scene, but for the sculpture.



This small terrace is packed with sculpture, including *Seed* by Gertrude Hermes (left) and *No Man is an Island* by Angela Godfrey.

The eminent architect and town planner Sir Frederick Gibberd came to Essex immediately after the Second World War to embark on designing Harlow New Town, which took shape over the ensuing decades; it stands today as an important example of mid-century civic modernism. In 1957 Gibberd bought a smallholding on Marsh Lane, set in fields on the outskirts of the town, arranging to work in Harlow on Mondays and Fridays so that he could develop his house and garden on the weekends.

The unprepossessing house was thoroughly 'Modernised' – the living room now has three large 'picture windows' for which Gibberd made three different garden scenes – but it was the developing garden that became the consuming project and the subject of frenetic activity, where Gibberd could indulge whims. The budget was not huge and the hard materials nothing special – indeed, some of them were simply leftovers from the Harlow building works (Gibberd also 'borrowed' the workforce on occasion).

There were some garden features in place when Gibberd appeared, including a formal pool and pavilion north of the house on the steep slope that tumbles down to the Pincey Stream, which marks the northern boundary of the property. There is also a short avenue of lime trees in the middle of the garden, 100 years old and 30m tall, which were planted far too close together but which flourish. Otherwise the garden was more or less a blank canvas, although a rather waterlogged one in its northern part, where a three-acre water meadow floods repeatedly.

What Gibberd developed through the 1960s and 1970s is an extremely complex garden with scores of different individual episodes to enjoy.

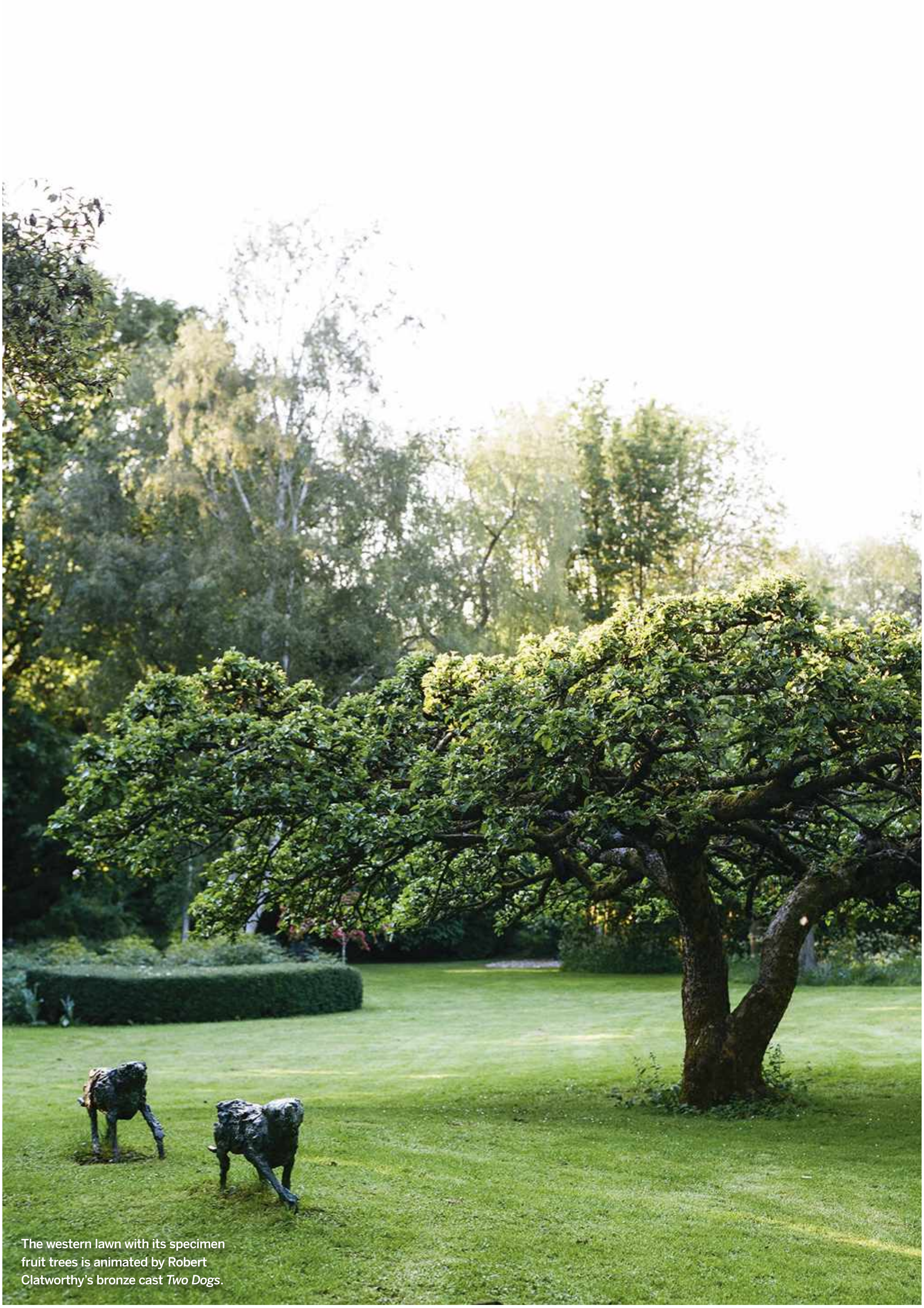
Gibberd collected modern art and all of the 90 or so abstract and figurative sculptures set about the garden – in cement, stone, steel, bronze and wood – were the work of contemporary artists. There is no rationale to their placement other than the architectural principles of spatial felicity and the ▷

Sir Frederick Gibberd (1908-84)

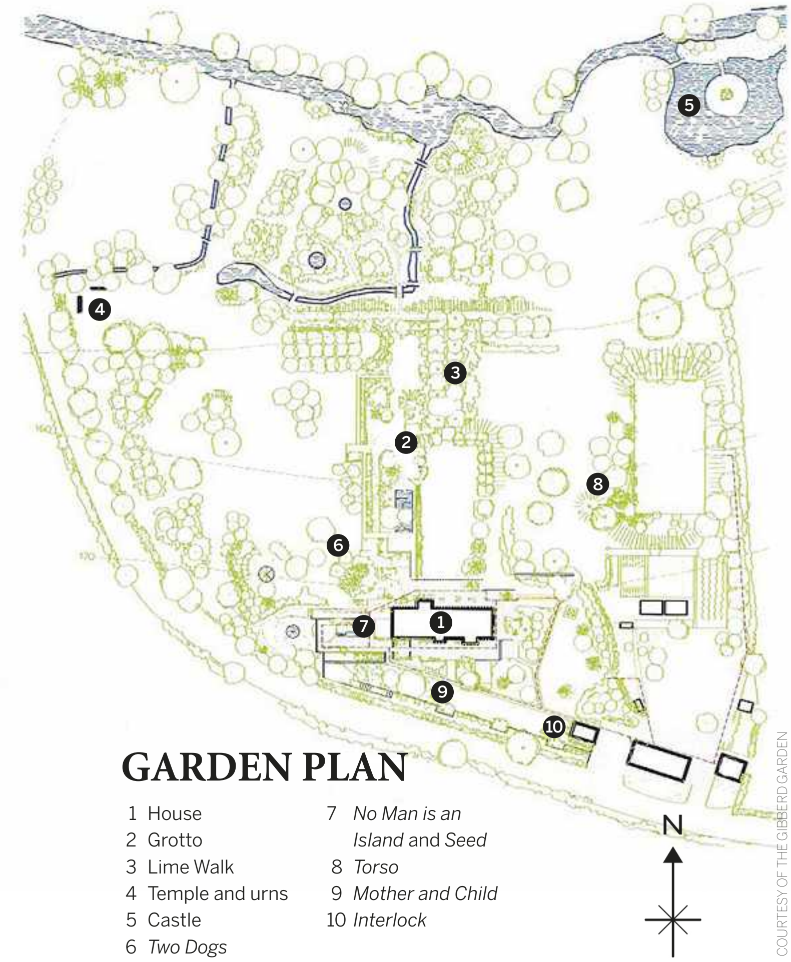
Born in Coventry, Gibberd trained in architecture at Birmingham School of Art, having first been apprenticed to a Warwick firm of architects at the age of 16. His first major commission was Pullman Court in Streatham, south London, which established him as a designer of modern blocks of flats. But work was sparse in the 1930s and after a period teaching – during the war he was Principal of the Architectural Association in London – Gibberd set up in practice again in 1944. He went on to design a string of important buildings including Terminals 1, 2 and 3 of Heathrow Airport, the glass-fronted Coutts Bank on the Strand in London and Liverpool's Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Harlow New Town was perhaps his major achievement, where landscape design was an important component.

RON BURTON / GETTY IMAGES



The western lawn with its specimen fruit trees is animated by Robert Clatworthy's bronze cast *Two Dogs*.



GARDEN PLAN

1 House
2 Grotto
3 Lime Walk
4 Temple and urns
5 Castle
6 *Two Dogs*
7 *No Man is an Island* and *Seed*
8 *Torso*
9 *Mother and Child*
10 *Interlock*

COURTESY OF THE GIBBERD GARDEN

Gibberd created an artificial cascade in the Pincey Stream, which adds a vital dimension to the garden.

▷ responsiveness of objects to each other. As head gardener Jackie Philpot observes: "He was an architect who was interested in the spaces and how they worked together. These are interrelated spaces and they guide you around the garden." The sculptures tend to be organised in clusters, in areas that interlock and lead in and out of each other, creating multiple vistas. There is certainly a comparison to be made with Gibberd's town planning work, which was founded on the ancient Greek and Roman idea of civic spaces that dynamically interact.

Over the years the planting became an increasingly important element in the garden, mainly in the form of groups of trees (silver birches, Lombardy poplars, maples) that offset the larger sculptures, but also more delicately through the use of herbaceous material in the terraced spaces around the house and in the pool area, which is adorned with pots. The west patio, for example, features a small straight rill and formerly a short pergola to match, crammed with small sculptures that can still be enjoyed. A lovely maple is the main horticultural interest but there are also clipped yews and dwarf conifers with semi-shade plants, such as heucheras, pulmonarias and euonymus.

There are several distinct moods in the garden, from the formal pool and grassy lawns to the north, to the areas near the stream, its evocative sound and sight enhanced by a cascade reputedly created by Gibberd using old fridges dumped into the water to provide bulk. The lime tree avenue is a rather startling interpolation – almost surreal – as is the tapestry hedge of different species that runs down the centre of the lawn.

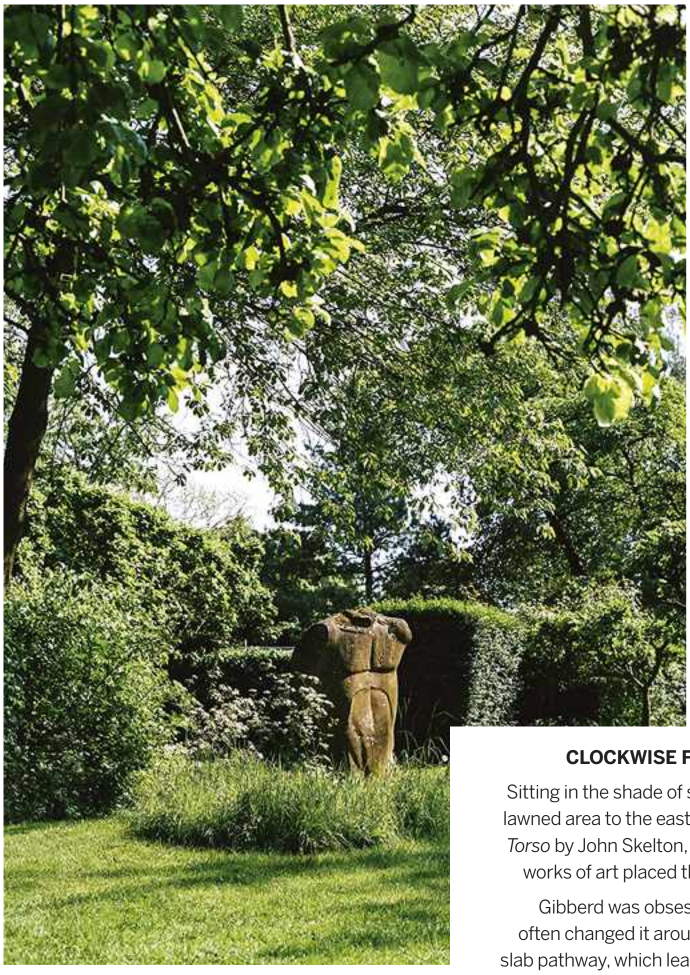
"Gibberd said it was a sculpture garden but he planted an awful lot of trees," says Jackie. There are common sycamores, ash and alder as well as specimens of weeping ash, pin oak, tulip tree and Atlantic cedar, together with many flowering and scented shrubs. The setting in open fields means that the garden is prone to high winds and there have been problems with branches or trees falling on sculptures. As a result, a certain amount of make-do-and-mend goes on. Jackie reveals: "I can knit, sew and lay bricks."

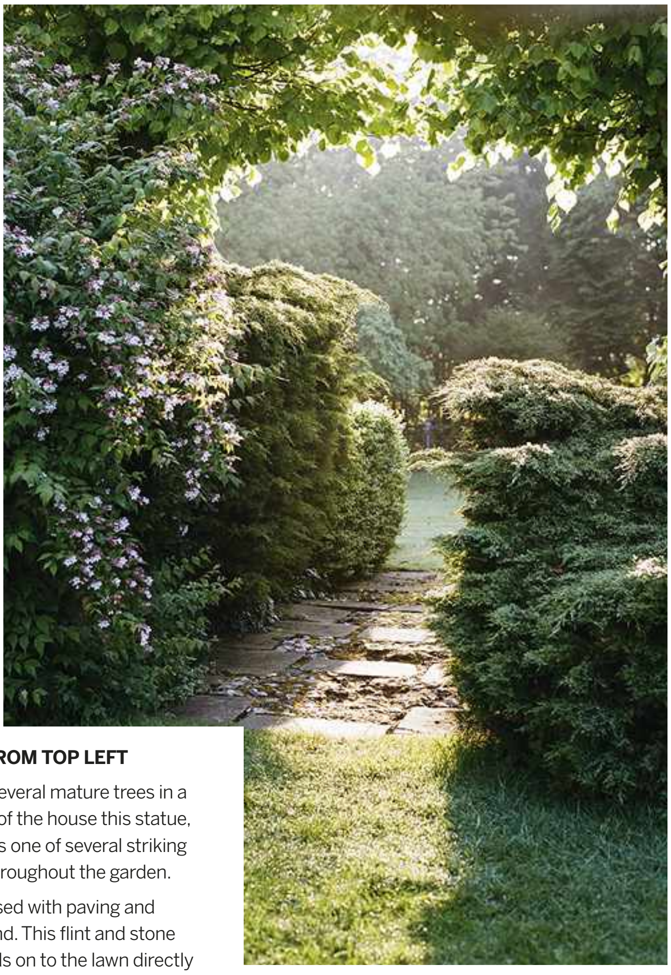
> *The lime tree avenue is a rather startling interpolation – almost surreal – as is the tapestry hedge of different species that runs down the centre of the lawn*

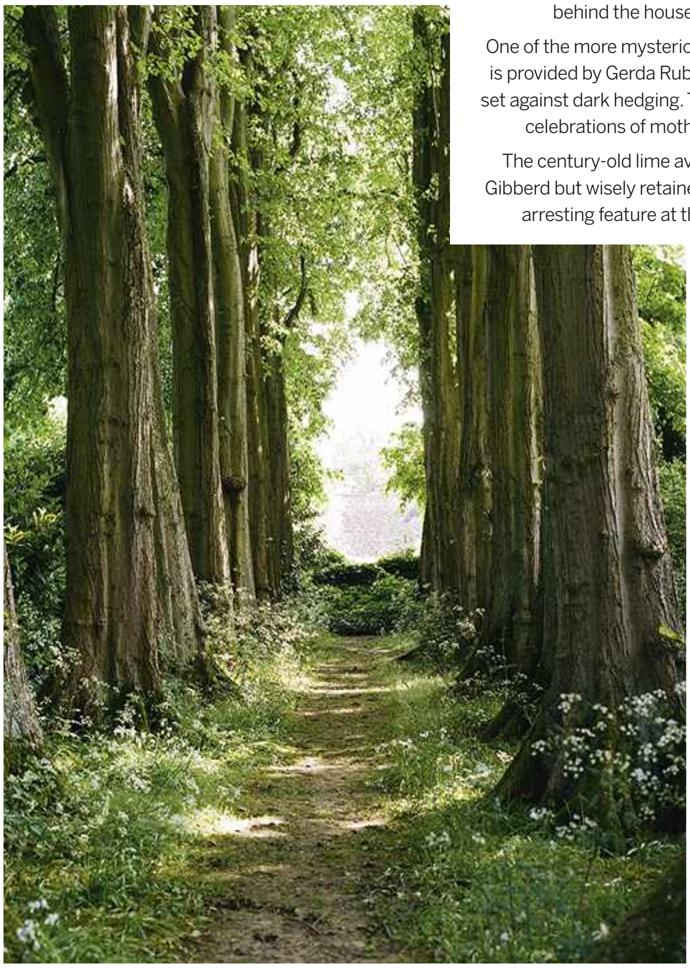
Following an uncertain period in the mid 1990s when the property was at one point put on the market, the garden was restored after 2002 with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. I last visited the garden in the late 1990s and its horticultural transformation today is astonishing. Now is a good time to visit the Gibberd Garden. □

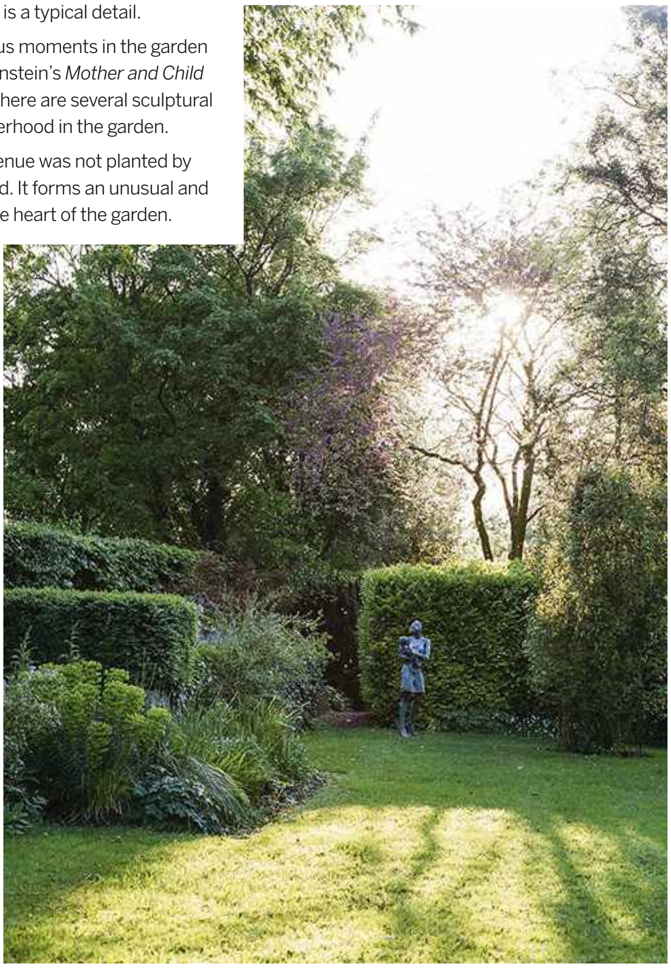
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address The Gibberd Garden, Marsh Lane, Harlow, Essex CM17 0NA.
Tel 01279 442112.
Website thegibberdgarden.co.uk









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Sitting in the shade of several mature trees in a lawned area to the east of the house this statue, *Torso* by John Skelton, is one of several striking works of art placed throughout the garden.

Gibberd was obsessed with paving and often changed it around. This flint and stone slab pathway, which leads on to the lawn directly behind the house, is a typical detail.

One of the more mysterious moments in the garden is provided by Gerda Rubinstein's *Mother and Child* set against dark hedging. There are several sculptural celebrations of motherhood in the garden.

The century-old lime avenue was not planted by Gibberd but wisely retained. It forms an unusual and arresting feature at the heart of the garden.

Set-piece effects

Works of art are arranged throughout the garden to create drama and atmosphere

1 Poolside perfection

Gibberd inherited the formal pool and the pavilion at its southern end, and he integrated it into the system of interlocking terraces he created around the house, each with its own artistic character. Terracotta pots were placed around the pool, with careful regard to their weighting and balance.

2 A dramatic entrance

Visitors know they have arrived somewhere 'different' when they enter the Gibberd garden. Flanking the gates are a striking pair of eagles made of ciment fondu (a kind of super-malleable cement) by Gerda Rubinstein. The gates give on to a small parking area where straight ahead a painted breeze-block wall is adorned by two abstract paintings by Stephen Knapp.

3 Narrow lawn and path

The front garden was arranged by Gibberd so that it feels more like a sculpted space than a domestic necessity. A gate opens on to a straight path that runs alongside and above the front of the house. Gibberd's children nicknamed it the M1. Several large abstract sculptures, including Paul Mount's chunky *Interlock*, are sited on the lawn here and help build the sense of anticipation.

4 Not too serious

Gibberd made the castle as a plaything for his grandchildren – and of course for himself. The mound for the keep (originally elm logs, later concrete) was created using the spoil removed for the encircling moat. In Gibberd's lifetime the English flag of St George always flew from a flagpole. It's an amusing addition in a serious garden.

5 Folly effect

Perhaps the most ambitious feature is the tableau formed by a pair of Portland stone columns and swagged Coade stone urns salvaged from the frontage of the original Coutts Bank in London, which Gibberd completely remodelled. In the manner of an episode in an 18th-century landscape park, the mood is gentle melancholy often associated with such decorous ruination.

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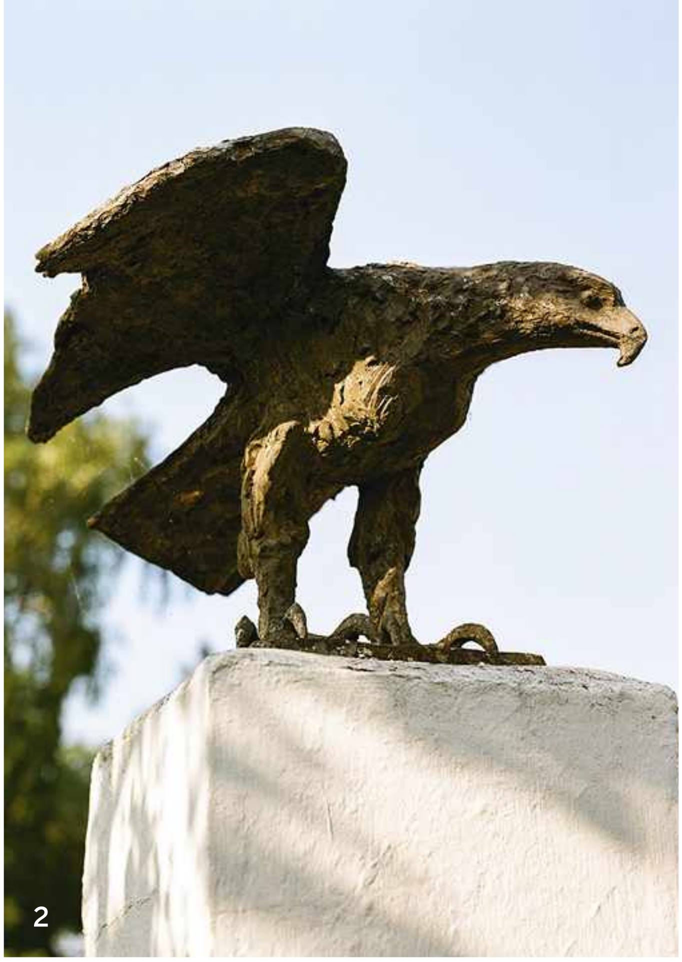

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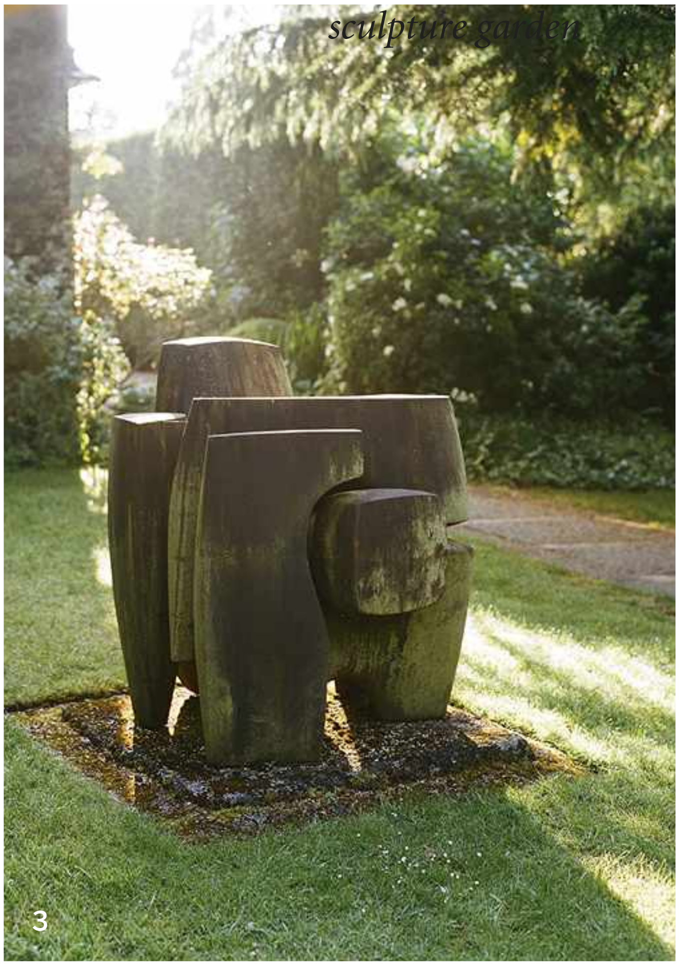

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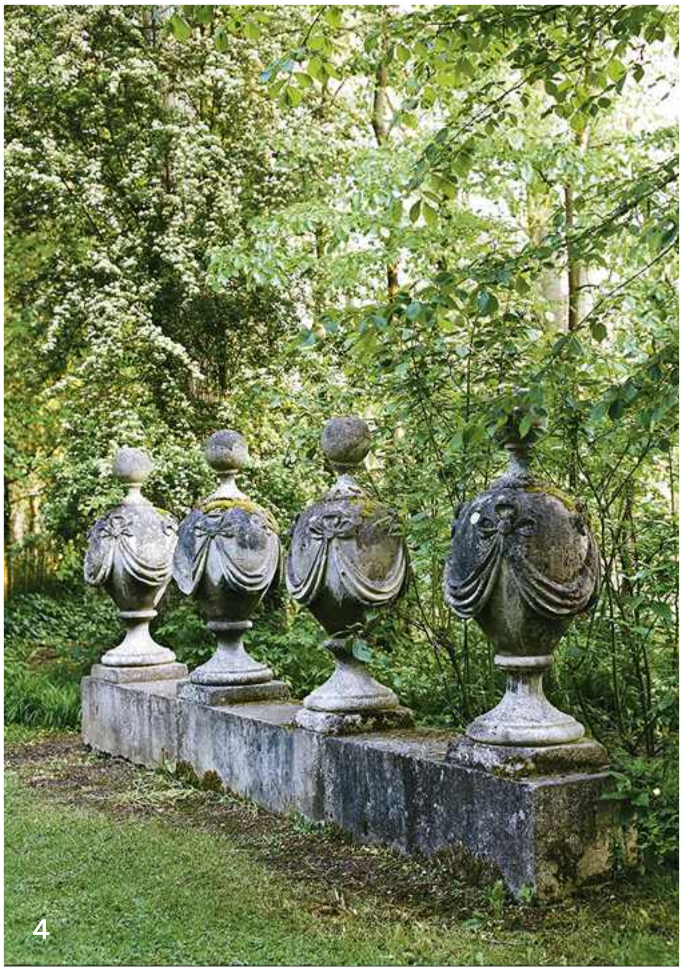

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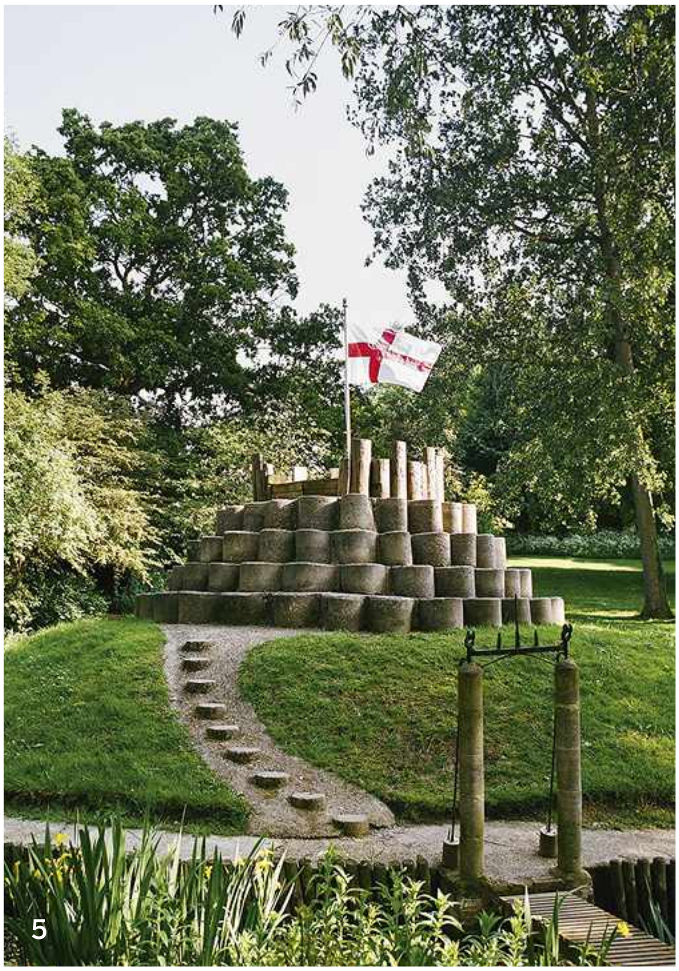

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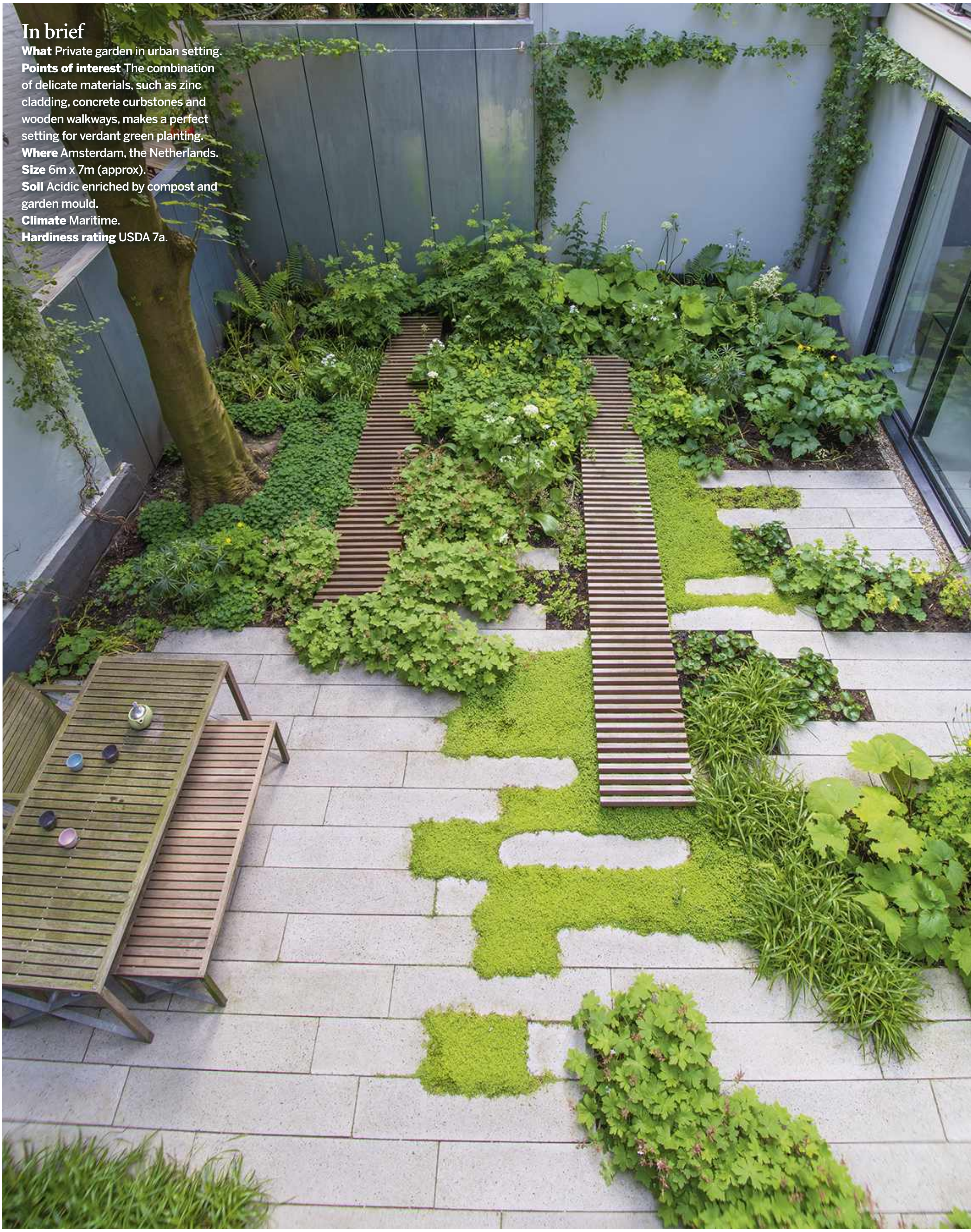
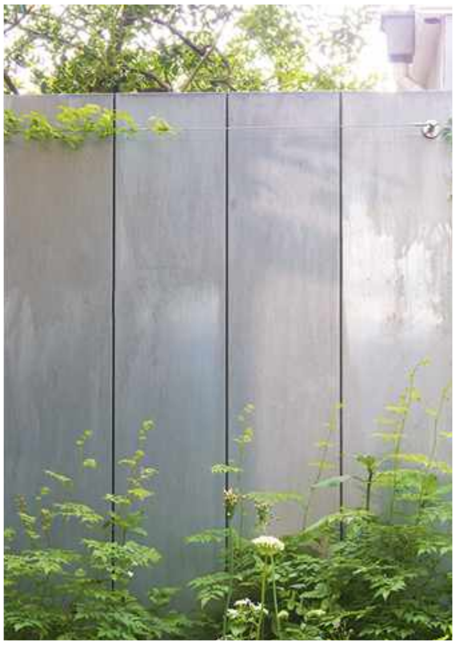
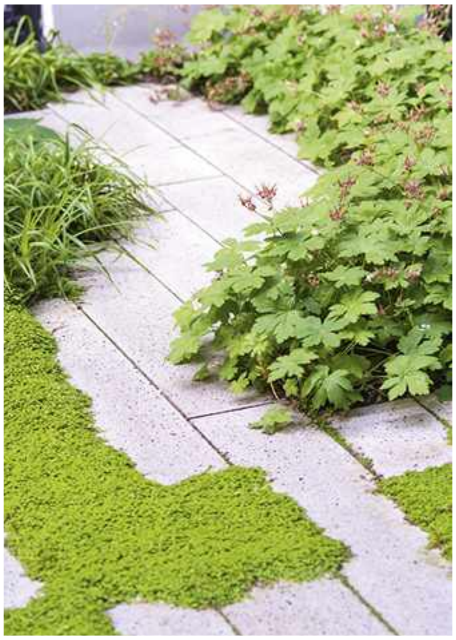
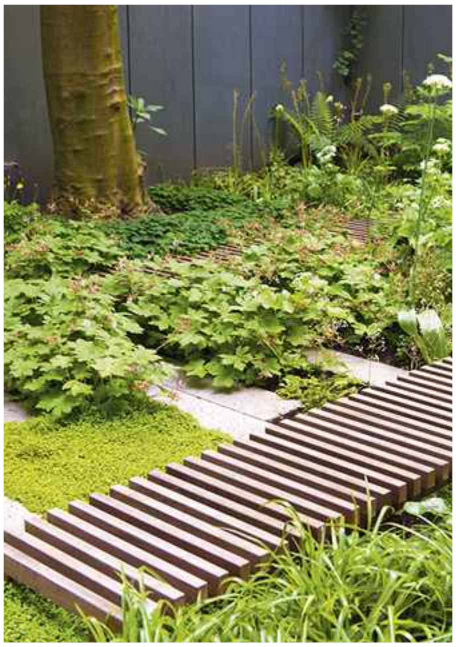


In brief

What Private garden in urban setting.
Points of interest The combination of delicate materials, such as zinc cladding, concrete curbstones and wooden walkways, makes a perfect setting for verdant green planting.
Where Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Size 6m x 7m (approx).
Soil Acidic enriched by compost and garden mould.
Climate Maritime.
Hardiness rating USDA 7a.







Making the most of a small space

Small gardens need big ideas: tall plants to tower above us, confident division of space and carefully selected materials. Designer Sarah Price takes a critical look at three designs to examine what elements can transform a tight urban space

WORDS SARAH PRICE PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER/STEVEN WOOSTER

Garden 1 designed by Carolien Barkman

Subtle contradictions are at work here. Cool and stylish, the planting and hard landscaping are arranged according to a strict grid, playfully broken up by planting laid out like an unfinished Scrabble board. I can imagine myself as a child, hoping over the green carpets of *Soleirolia soleirolii* and skipping along the floating wooden walkways.

The five-storey apartment building and tall, existing *Acer pseudoplatanus* cast this garden in shade yet the blue-grey tones of the colour palette make the space appear larger and brighter than it really is. The cool tones of the concrete pavers, painted rendered walls and zinc cladding seamlessly blend with the fabric of the apartment, effectively offsetting the verdant green planting so that it takes centre stage. The zinc panels are a beautiful, sophisticated take on cladding, their soft sheen reflects light back into the space. They do not shout, instead they unify the space. The thin hair line between each zinc panel is a further satisfying linear detail.

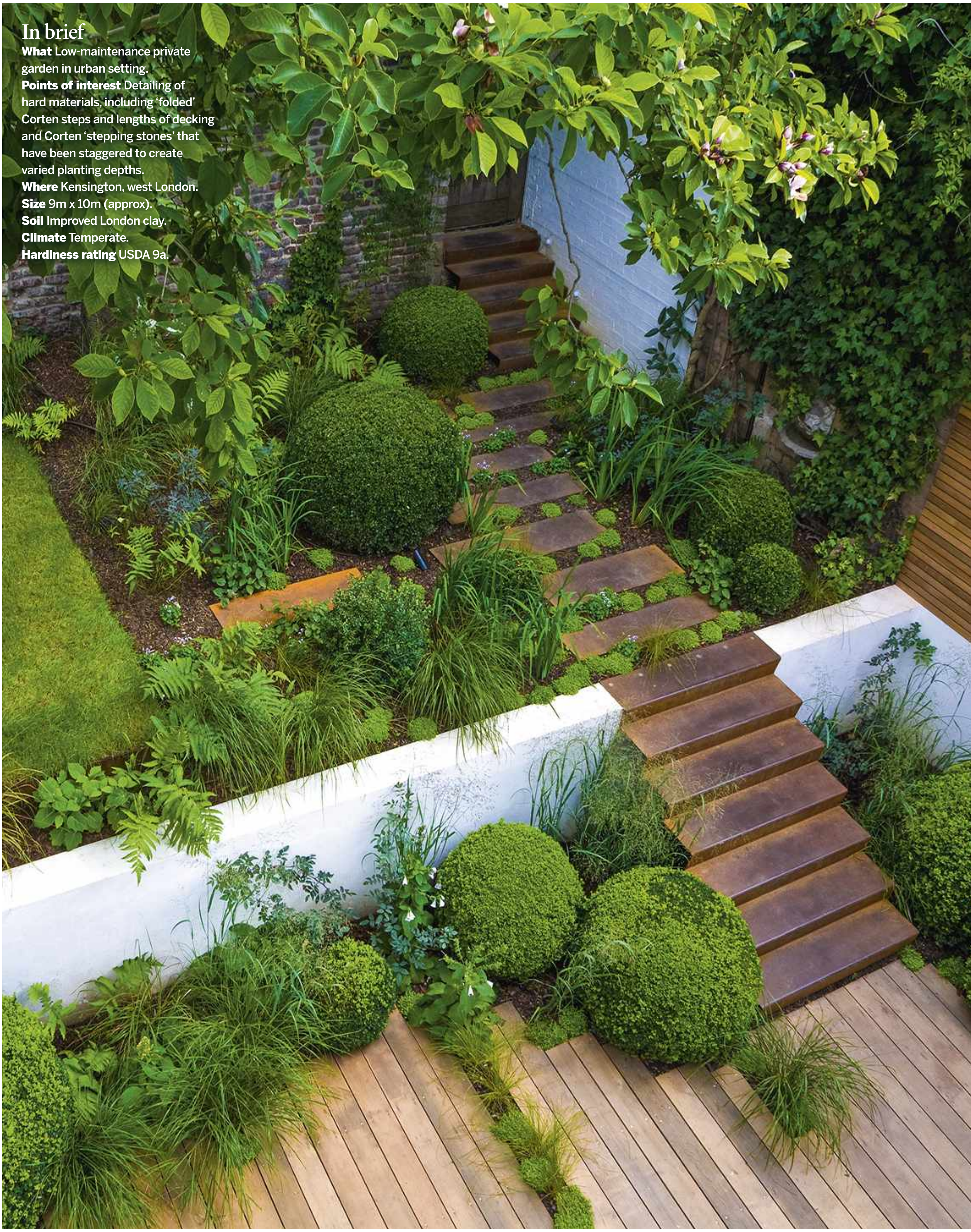
The balance between all the elements of the garden is perfect. Wood introduces warmth into the space. The slatted garden furniture and floating wooden walkways add depth to the garden composition. The walkways are placed 20cm above ground level and the slats are spaced to allow glimpses of *Soleirolia soleirolii* and *Asarum europaeum* growing beneath. Such detail is everywhere. The concrete curbstones have an organic, pitted texture that contrast with alternating rectangles of low evergreens: *Luzula sylvatica*, *Saxifraga* x *urbium* and the semi-evergreen *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart'. This variation of leaf form is extended across the garden from the delicate clover-like leaves of *Oxalis acetosella* var. *rosea*, thriving beneath the acer, to the bold, paddle-like leaves of *Astilboides tabularis*.

Key elements of the design

1 Zinc cladding softly reflects light into the shady space. Cladding is invaluable for hiding ugly boundaries and structures, and needn't be expensive. Salvaged wood cladding is very on trend.

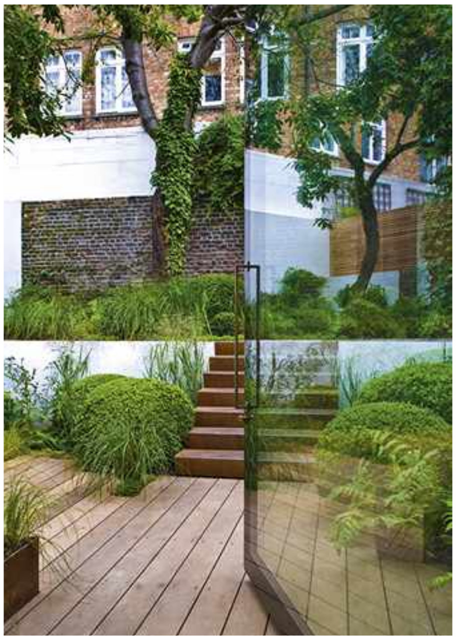
2 The imaginative composition of plants and hard materials creates a year-round picture. The dimensions of the paving units dictate the ground pattern and set up a play of repetition across the space. This geometry is reflected in the proportions and lines of the wooden walkways, furniture and panelled cladding.

3 Textural contrast in plant forms. A careful selection of shade-loving plants creates a green picture throughout the year. Fine-leaved tussock grasses contrast with the heart-shaped leaves of *Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Album' and graceful ferns, such as *Polystichum setiferum*. *Aruncus* 'Horatio', *Lunaria annua* var. *albiflora*, *Meconopsis cambrica* complete the green picture, while bulbs *Allium nigrum* and *Nectaroscordum siculum* subsp. *bulgaricum* bring further highlights.



In brief

What Low-maintenance private garden in urban setting.
Points of interest Detailing of hard materials, including 'folded' Corten steps and lengths of decking and Corten 'stepping stones' that have been staggered to create varied planting depths.
Where Kensington, west London.
Size 9m x 10m (approx).
Soil Improved London clay.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness rating USDA 9a.



Garden 2 designed by Sarah Price

Excavating and removing earth is never an easy operation, especially in London gardens where access is difficult. However, bold moves can make a space, and when accepting this 2008 commission, I knew that the success of this garden depended on excavating the upper ground level away from the house. This not only let light into the downstairs interior but also created space for a seating area to step out directly on to and enjoy.

The connection between inside and out was enhanced by introducing large glass windows and doors that look out on to the garden. A large portion of the budget was spent on creating a set of sculptural, Corten steel steps to bridge the different garden levels. The folded form of the steps appear to float above the box domes, which in time will merge and form abstract cloud-like forms, a counterpoint to the sharp angles of the garden. The evergreen and ever adaptable grass *Anemanthele lessoniana* intersperses the box, providing strong contrast in form and arching habit. The staggered lines of the Corten stepping stones encourage you to pick your way through the planting. They lead to a rectangle of lawn, edged in Corten steel and raised slightly above the surrounding planting. The uniform texture of the mown grass, emphasise the beautiful form and shadows of the existing Magnolia tree.

Not all designs are fully realised, every designer runs the risk of their design plans not being fully implemented. In this case the retaining wall was rendered a stark white and not limewashed in a muted tone as specified, and this somewhat harsh approach was also adopted for random sections of the old London brick walls. As an alternative, sensitive repointing in lime mortar and a green matrix of climbers would have been a more sympathetic approach to the overall scheme.

READER EVENT

Sarah Price will be discussing her planting style at the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival in April. For details see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

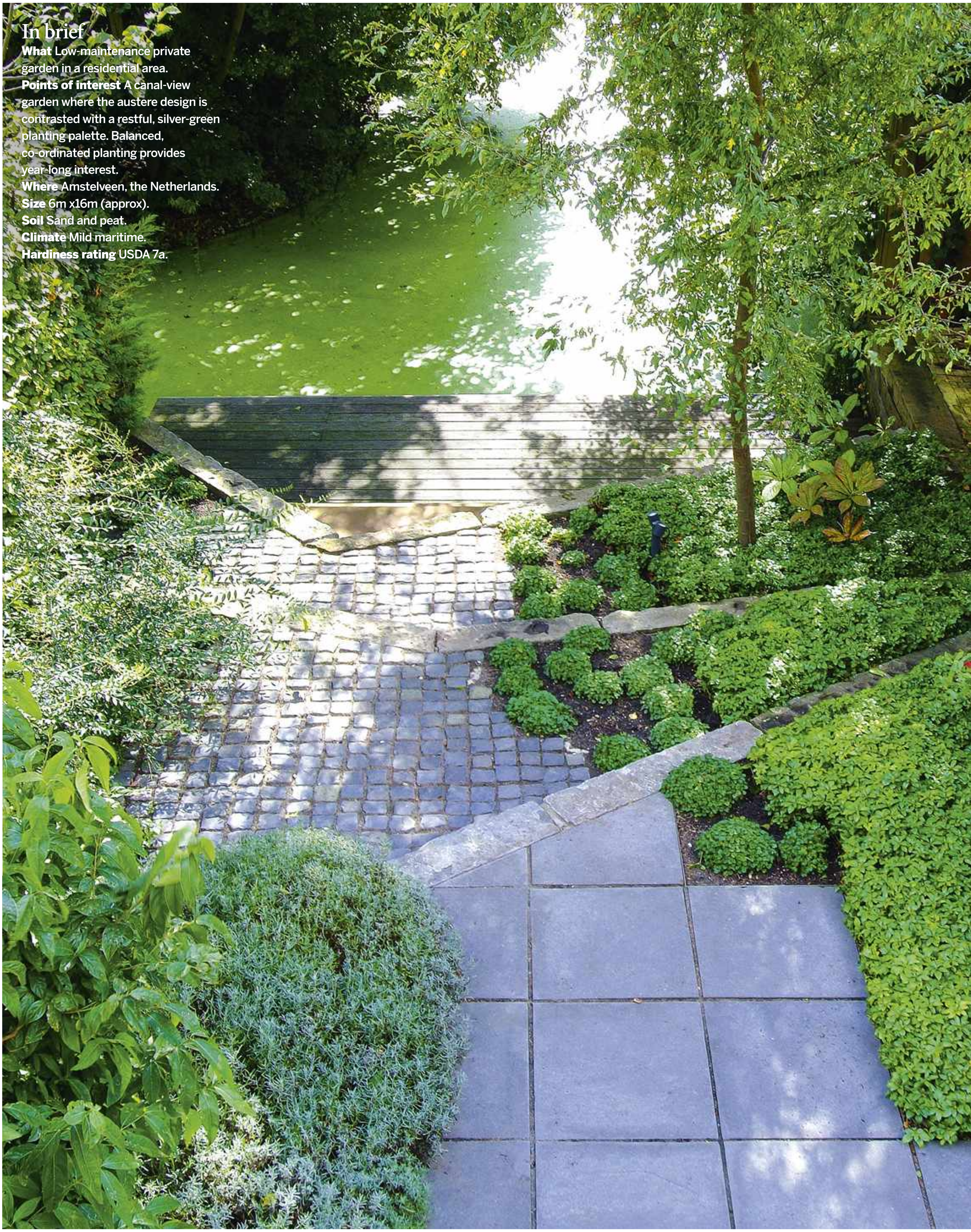
Key elements of the design

1 A seamless transition from inside to out was enhanced by matching the decking to the width, direction and floor level of the interior floorboards.

2 The lengths of the decking boards were varied to create a staggered boundary to the planting area. This breaks up the visual impact of the dominant retaining wall and allows pockets of deep planting to create the illusion of greater space.

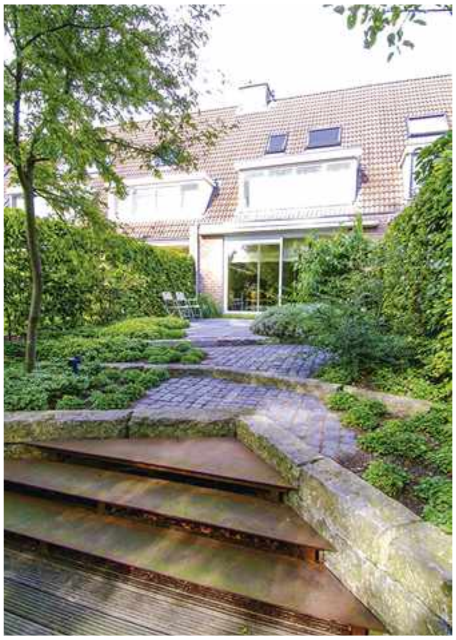
3 Limit material selection. The rusty orange patina of Corten steel was chosen to complement the warm tones of the old London brick along the back boundary. It is also a striking partner to fresh green planting. Choose a dominant material and repeat it across the space to integrate.

4 A restrained planting palette will unify a small garden. The evergreen matrix of *Buxus* and *Anemanthele lessoniana* is interplanted with *Tulipa*, *Narcissus*, *Hesperis*, *Helleborus* and *Digitalis* for spring interest. These are tough plants that won't mind too much if they are shaded out later in the year. The annual tobacco plant, *Nicotiana sylvestris* adds scent, height and visual drama through summer into autumn. Live-fast-die-young annuals work hard in small town gardens, where you can plant them en masse to great effect.



In brief

What Low-maintenance private garden in a residential area.
Points of interest A canal-view garden where the austere design is contrasted with a restful, silver-green planting palette. Balanced, co-ordinated planting provides year-long interest.
Where Amstelveen, the Netherlands.
Size 6m x16m (approx).
Soil Sand and peat.
Climate Mild maritime.
Hardiness rating USDA 7a.



Garden 3 designed by Luc Englehard

It is easy to imagine sitting on the canalside deck in this garden, enjoying the play of dappled light through the trees and on to the water. It is a restrained garden space, confidently designed so that the focus is always on the borrowed view of the canal. The rest of the garden is relatively static, with low-maintenance plants and materials that act as a counterpoint to the changing play of light on the water.

The unusual, angular composition of this design makes the most of a narrow space and the borrowed view of the canal. The diagonal lines of the paving pull you towards the canal in a slow, meandering fashion. Subtle changes of direction are always an effective design ploy, especially in a narrow garden where it will create the illusion of greater space. You never want a direct route that will allow you to rush to the end of the garden without pausing to indulge your senses. The level changes down from the house to the canalside further this sense of journey and the illusion of space.

Low-maintenance planting is dominated by evergreen *Pachysandra terminalis* 'Green Carpet', which is a perfect candidate for carpeting bare areas of earth and this, together with *Lavandula angustifoli*a 'Munstead', forms a low, horizontal contrast to the slender upright accent of a Japanese crab apple, *Malus toringo*. This is a small tree at maturity making it perfect for a small space. It's also a clever choice for a canalside garden, as it has a pendulous-shaped crown that echoes waterside trees, such as weeping willow. Here, it has been artfully positioned to both partially screen and frame the waterside view, adding a sense of discovery to your journey through the garden. □

Key elements of the design

1 Make the most of an attractive 'borrowed view' by composing your garden as you would a picture. Frame the beautiful form of a mature tree in the distance with a simply placed tree or an informal, staggered line of shrubs that will direct your eye to the view. Sensitive pruning of existing trees and shrubs is often effective in opening and framing views.

2 Change levels within a small garden. A simple step down or up to a raised area, such as a deck, within your garden will create a greater sense of space.

3 Consider the route that you will take through the space. Avoid creating direct routes in a small garden. By running sections of paving directly up to your boundary walls you will make your garden feel wider. Position a multi-stem tree or tall, semi-transparent grasses to partially veil the garden's view. This will create an even greater illusion of space.

4 Boundaries make or break a small garden. Keep them simple and uniform. Hornbeam hedging along the two boundary lengths of the garden creates a calm, green frame.

5 The mix of hard materials in this space makes a break – but only just successfully – with the standard design rule of limiting your material palette to two or three materials that work to unify a space. The blue tones of the concrete tiles and Belgian blue stone setts tonally merge as does the warmth of the Corten 'floating steps' and wooden decking.

Hans Kramer

He's the unassuming owner of one of Europe's most admired specialist nurseries and we're delighted to introduce him as our latest columnist

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Ask most specialist nurserymen about their favourite nurseries and you'll probably find De Hessenhof in the Netherlands high on their list. Great Dixter's head gardener Fergus Garrett describes it as "one of the best nurseries in Europe".

I first visited more than 20 years ago and still treasure my copy of a heavily annotated catalogue. The man who runs De Hessenhof is Hans Kramer, a tall, quiet-spoken Dutchman who has developed a reputation for a sharp eye, an unrivalled knowledge of perennial plants, and for the quality and variety of the plants he produces.

It is hard to imagine that 35 years ago, the nursery, now packed with stock beds, bordered with displays of mother plants and shaded by mature holm oaks, was little more than a sheep meadow. In 1981, when he was just 20, Hans persuaded his grandfather, a farmer, to let him grow plants on the land. "I had finished horticultural college," he says. "It was a time of economic crisis and there were no jobs. I knew that eventually I would want to run my own nursery and just decided that the only way to earn a living would be to try straight away. I took the plunge." In other parts of the country, nurserymen Piet Oudolf and Coen Jansen were also at the start of their careers, and across Europe there was a burgeoning interest in perennial plants. "It was an exciting time and I feel very lucky to have been starting out then," says Hans.

A significant moment came in 1982 when Hans persuaded his parents to lend him the family car to visit Britain to look for plants. "From the ferry I drove directly to Great Dixter and was entranced by the plants I saw," he says. "Christopher Lloyd appeared, shouting at me and telling me off because the gardens didn't open until the afternoon." Lloyd mellowed when the enthusiastic Hans explained his desire to run a perennials nursery, and the two became friends.

On the same trip Hans met nurserywoman Elizabeth Strangman. "I admired her enormously. She knew so much about perennial plants and was an example of how to run a nursery. She was a huge inspiration to me. A role model and a mentor." The two remain friends. "Every moment of that first journey to England is etched into my memory. I still have many plants that I bought with me on that trip and they are like old and dear friends. I am very attached to those plants, I feel emotional about them."

Since then Hans has developed a keen eye for neglected species and new cultivars, and amassed an encyclopaedic collection of perennial plants. Currently, his stock beds are filled with 6,000 different types of plant and the nursery's catalogue (now a weighty tome) lists some 3,000 different plants. "Miranda [Hans's wife] says I should try and edit out a few plants, but I find that very difficult," admits Hans. "Each of them has something to offer, each of them I have selected because they are special. When I think that a plant has something good about it I become an evangelist for it."

Miranda first came to work at the nursery 25 years ago, as a student attending the same college at which Hans had studied and sharing his love of plants. He is emphatic that the success of the nursery is as much due to Miranda as it is to himself. "We are a partnership, a joint enterprise," he says. "We have grown into this nursery together and the nursery has grown with us." Hans admits he doesn't like glib descriptions of him as being 'passionate about plants', but it is evident in the way he speaks that this mild-mannered Dutchman has an ardent enthusiasm for his work.

From the very beginning Hans has made his own compost (from tonnes of leaf mould collected by the local authority) and has used few chemicals, having decided eight years ago to make the nursery completely organic. While he was establishing his nursery, the renowned German nurseryman Ernst Pagels was encouraging. "He was very generous," says Hans. "And I admired that he ran his nursery organically, despite the scoffers. Now other growers laugh at me when they see that I pinch plants out to make them bushy rather than spray on a chemical. I took this step for myself, for my family and for our staff. Growing plants organically is the right thing to do."

The nursery now attracts visitors from all over the world. "Of course, I feel proud when a group of gardeners travels from Moscow to visit me," he says. "But I'm also very happy that local gardeners come here to buy plants because they're good plants well grown. What makes me most happy, though, is growing plants. Sowing seeds, growing plants is the joy of my life and that is what I will always do." □

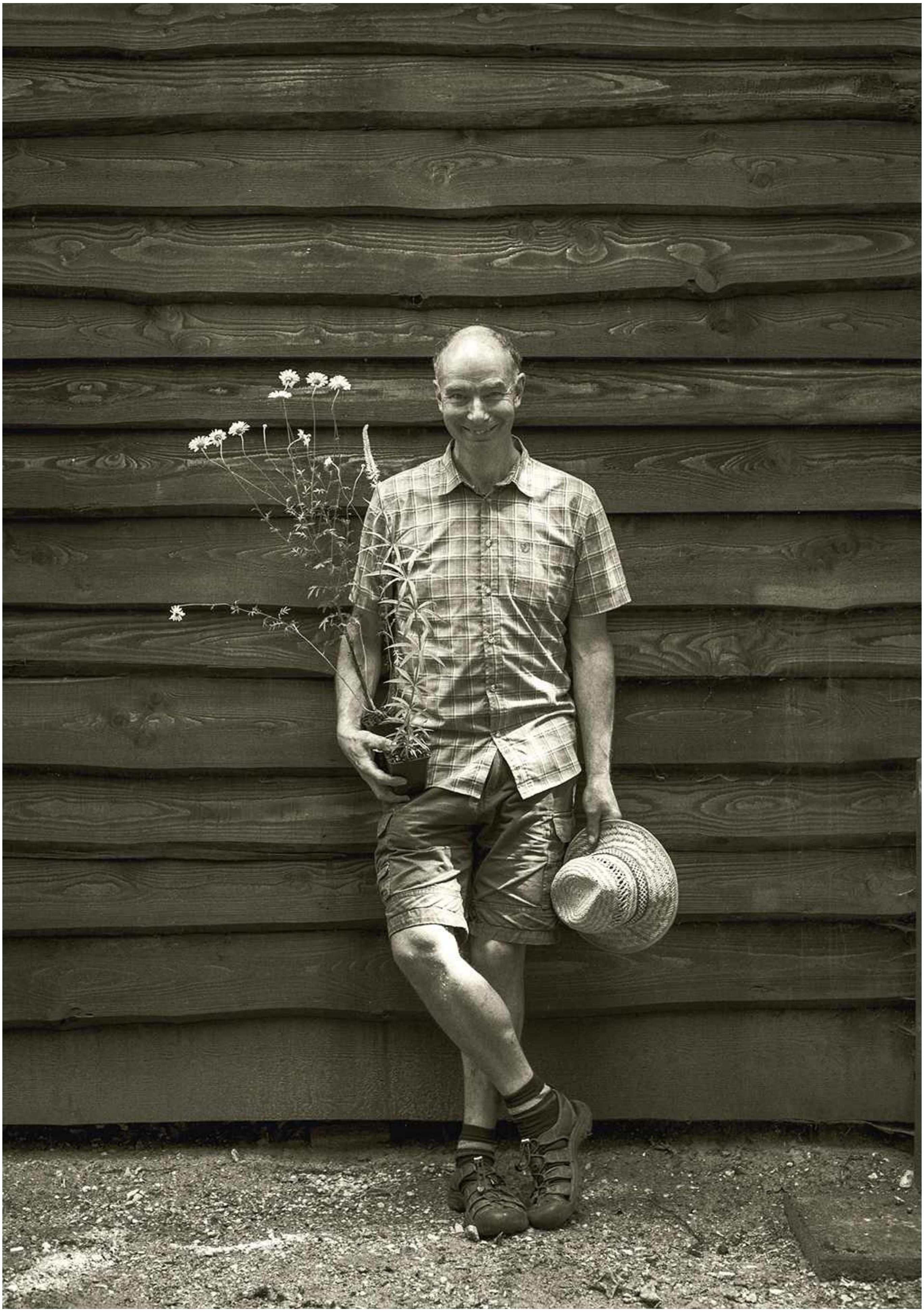
USEFUL INFORMATION

From this month Hans Kramer takes over our Plantsman's Favourites column, and you can read his first selection of plants for February on page 22. You can find out more about De Hessenhof at hessenhof.nl

NEXT MONTH

Mick Evans, head gardener at the National Trust's Packwood House.

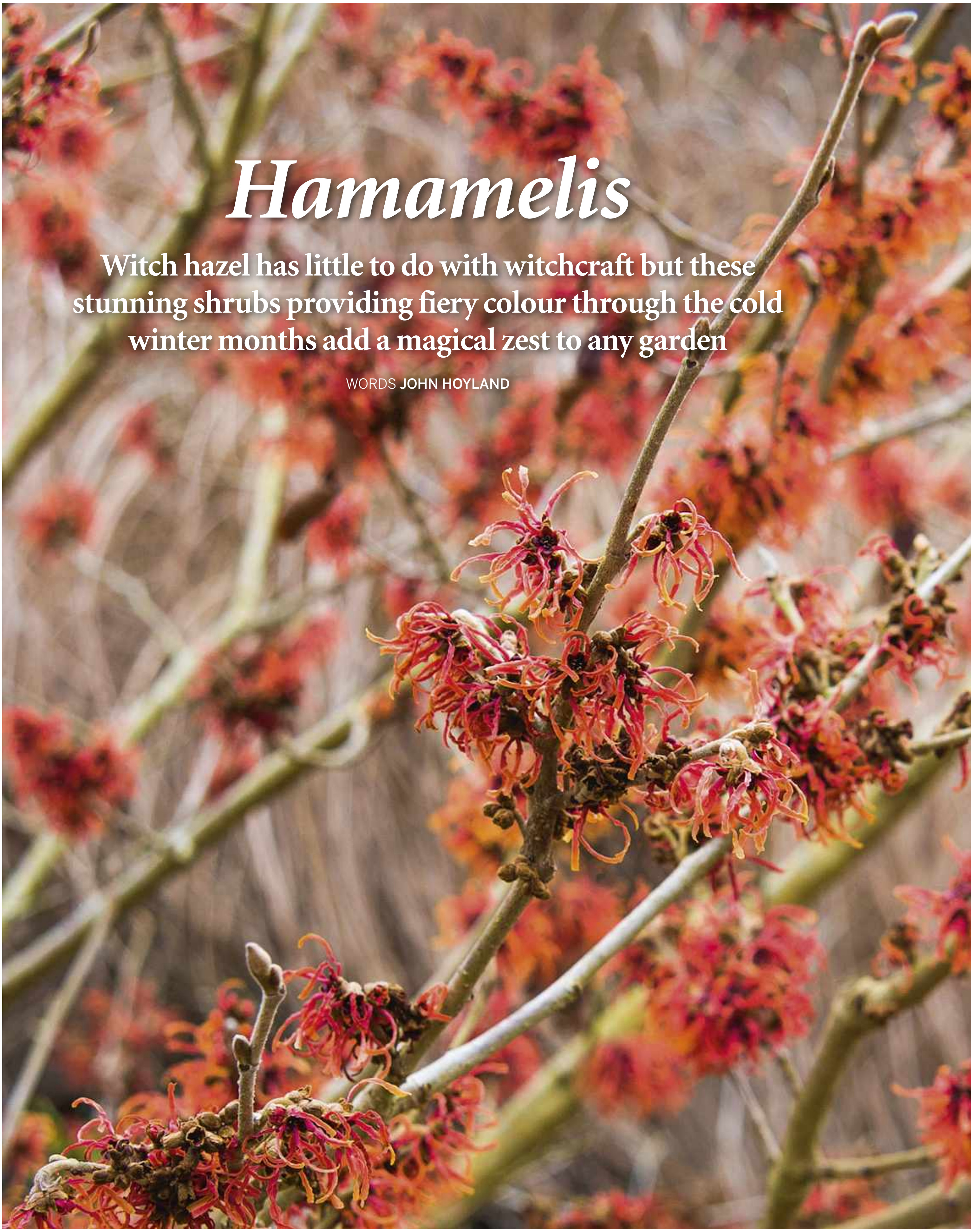
> *Of course I feel proud when gardeners travel here from Moscow, but I'm also happy that local gardeners come here to buy plants because they're good plants well grown*



Hamamelis

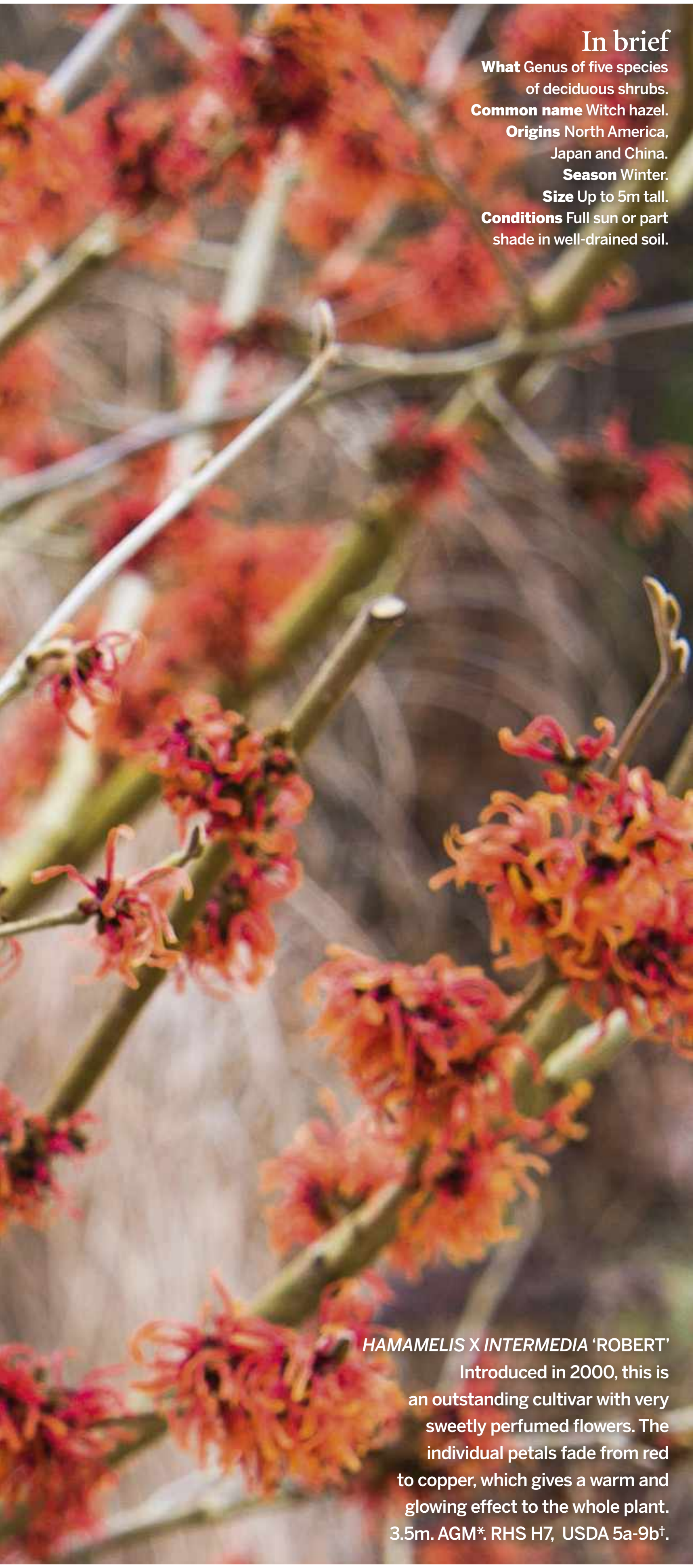
Witch hazel has little to do with witchcraft but these stunning shrubs providing fiery colour through the cold winter months add a magical zest to any garden

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND**



In brief

What Genus of five species of deciduous shrubs.
Common name Witch hazel.
Origins North America, Japan and China.
Season Winter.
Size Up to 5m tall.
Conditions Full sun or part shade in well-drained soil.



HAMAMELIS X INTERMEDIA 'ROBERT' Introduced in 2000, this is an outstanding cultivar with very sweetly perfumed flowers. The individual petals fade from red to copper, which gives a warm and glowing effect to the whole plant. 3.5m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b†.

CAROLE DRAKE / ALAMY

John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in both southeast England and southwest France.

Right now, the vitality and hullabaloo of April is a long way off but there are stirrings, clear indications that the lifelessness of the past two months is over. February stands as a buffer between the barrenness of winter and the fertility of spring, when the few tenacious flowering plants that have been struggling through spiteful weather and dark days begin to burgeon and flourish.

Among these are hamamelis, which, having been flowering stoically throughout the winter, are now reaching their peak, revitalised by the slight lengthening of daylight and the slight rise in temperature. You can almost hear them exhale as buds slowly unfurl and flowers begin to send out their perfume. By the end of the month the plant has gathered such momentum that it is covered in blossom and the garden is filled with its citrus scent, and, because most flower before any leaves appear, the effect is dramatic.

The individual blooms unscrunch their spidery flowers from brown suede buds, never losing that initial crumpled look. The petals resemble the peel left behind by an orange zester and, although fragile-looking, the flowers are hardy and long-lasting. I have seen flowers of *H. mollis* that have been encased in ice in the morning, which, later in the day, after the thaw, are still sparkling and fresh, rather than the brown mush that so many other flowers would have become. While hamamelis are mainly grown for their flowers, many forms also have luminous autumn foliage that provides dramatic contrasts with the shrub's glossy black seed.

In the wild, the genus is found in North America, China and Japan. *H. virginiana* grows along the east coast of America. Its yellow flowers are often hidden by the dense foliage and it has the distinction of flowering in the autumn rather than in late winter. Its relative from central North America, *H. vernalis*, is a similar shrub but with winter flowering. In 2006 a third American

▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ species was described, localised in a creek in Mississippi. Named *H. ovalis* it has large leaves and wine-red flowers and, reportedly, vibrant autumn foliage.

H. virginiana was the first of the group to be grown in Europe, introduced to Britain in the 1740s by Peter Collinson, a wealthy cloth merchant and gardener who had the plant sent to him from America. Often overlooked, Collinson was a prime mover in the development of British gardens, importing seeds and plants from the New World and distributing them to gardeners, scientists and nurseries.

You would now be hard pressed to find a specimen of *H. virginiana* for sale in a British nursery as, around the turn of last century, two new species were introduced that were considered by nurserymen to be superior garden plants. The first, *H. japonica*, has much larger flowers and more vibrant autumn foliage than either of its US cousins and caused a sensation among the gardening cognoscenti.

A Chinese species, *H. mollis*, was collected in the late 19th century by Charles Maries, who was working for Veitch & Sons in London, and first sold in 1902. Although its flowers are smaller than those of *H. japonica*, it has a much stronger scent and became even more popular. Plant breeders immediately saw the benefits of combining the best attributes of the two species and began work on developing hybrids that resulted in *H.* x *intermedia*.

Cultivars of *H.* x *intermedia* were bred throughout the early part of the last century to achieve flowers ranging from pale lemon to deep burgundy, all with the hardiness and scent of their parents. It is these cultivars that are most interesting for gardeners. Planted in groups on carpets of snowdrops, hellebores and winter aconites, they have become an indispensable element of winter gardens. Isolated specimens, too, can look impressive: I know a garden with a single specimen of *H.* x *intermedia* 'Arnold Promise' that is planted so that its sulphur-yellow flowers are seen against the rising sun. On some dull February mornings it is so dazzling that it seems brighter than the sun itself, as if urging it on and reminding us that we are on our way – just a few more weeks and we will be out of the dark days and into spring.

• John's recommendations for hamamelis continue over the next six pages.

Yellow-flowered forms

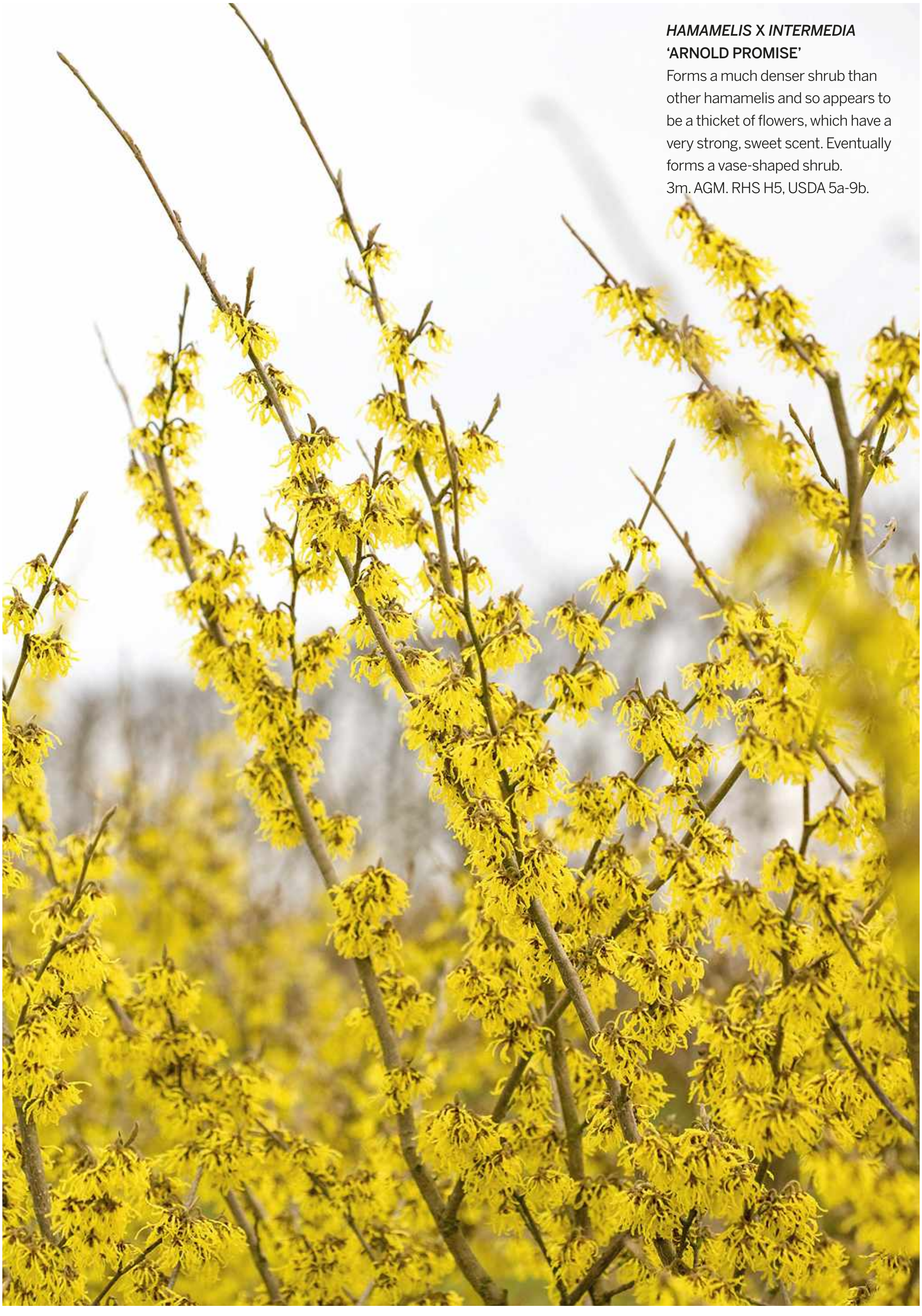
***H. MOLLIS* 'WISLEY SUPREME'**
The clear, yellow flowers are sweetly scented and begin to appear as early as November. The autumn foliage is bright yellow. The shrub spreads with age, eventually becoming 3m wide. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

***H.* X *INTERMEDIA* 'PALLIDA'**
Popular for both for its penetrating perfume and the masses of pale-yellow flowers that have a ghostly glow at twilight, this is perhaps the most widely available hamamelis. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

H. MOLLIS
The best of the species, with strongly perfumed flowers. In autumn the pale green foliage melts to a soft, buttery yellow. Slow growing, it will take 20 years to reach full height. 4m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

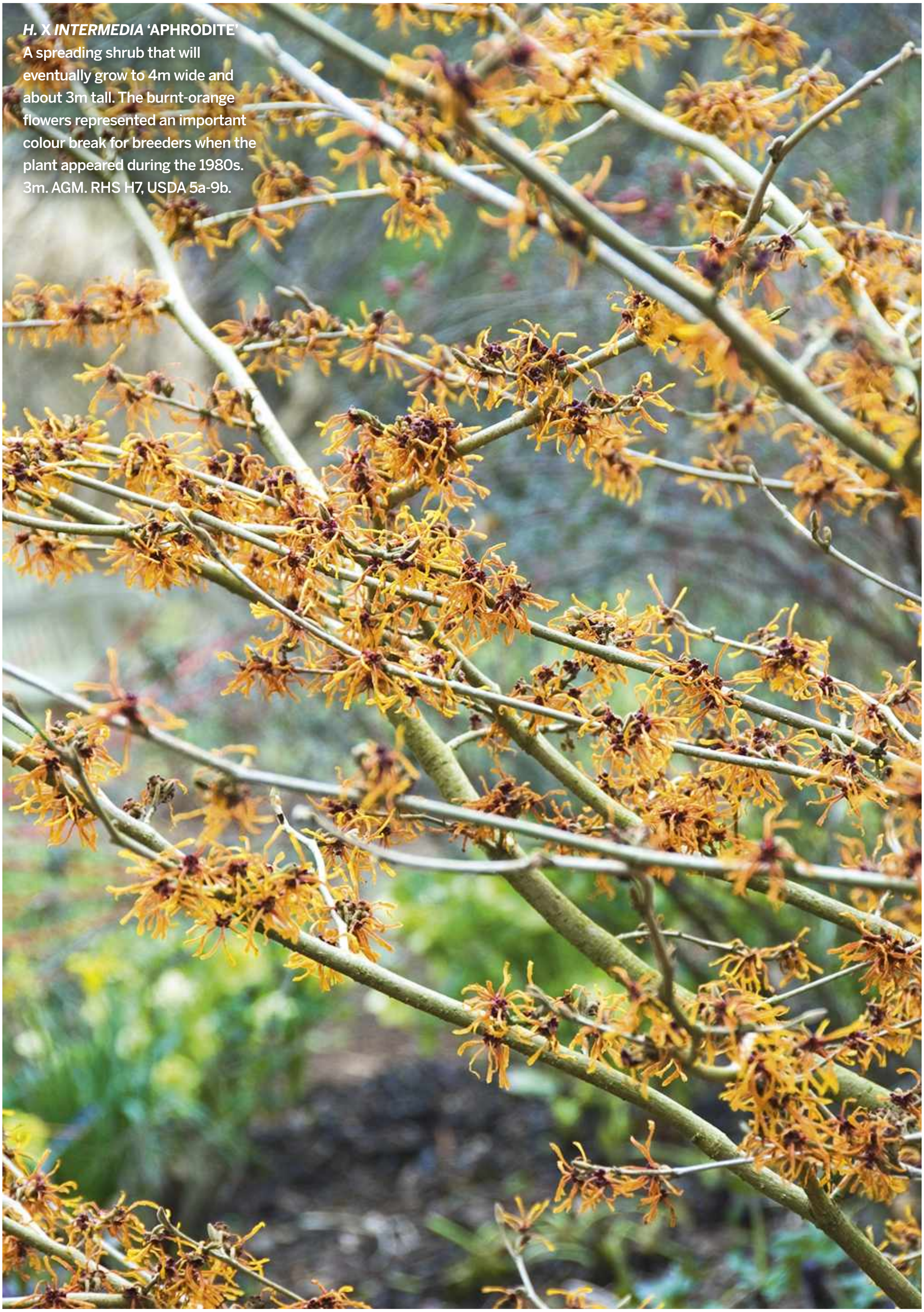
***H. MOLLIS* 'IMPERIALIS'**
Its strongly scented flowers are perhaps the largest of the genus. They're pale yellow with a red tint at the base of the petals. Young plants have sparse flowers, increasing as the plant matures. 3m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARIANNE MAJERUS, MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS / GAP PHOTOS, MARCUS HARPUR / GAP PHOTOS, HEATHER EDWARDS / GAP PHOTOS



***HAMAMELIS* X *INTERMEDIA* 'ARNOLD PROMISE'**
Forms a much denser shrub than other hamamelis and so appears to be a thicket of flowers, which have a very strong, sweet scent. Eventually forms a vase-shaped shrub.
3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

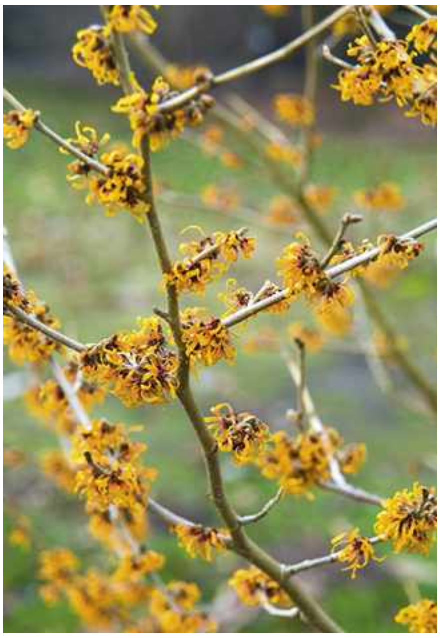
SHARON PEARSON / GAP PHOTOS



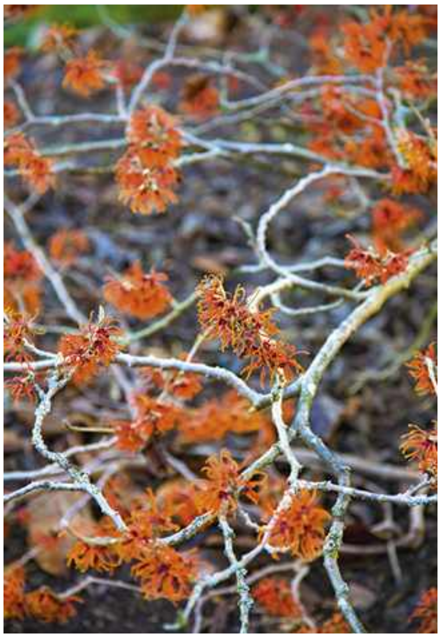
***H. X INTERMEDIA* 'APHRODITE'**
A spreading shrub that will eventually grow to 4m wide and about 3m tall. The burnt-orange flowers represented an important colour break for breeders when the plant appeared during the 1980s. 3m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS

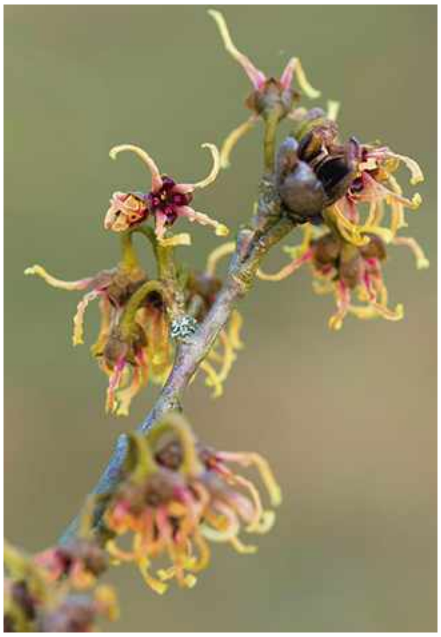
Orange-flowered forms



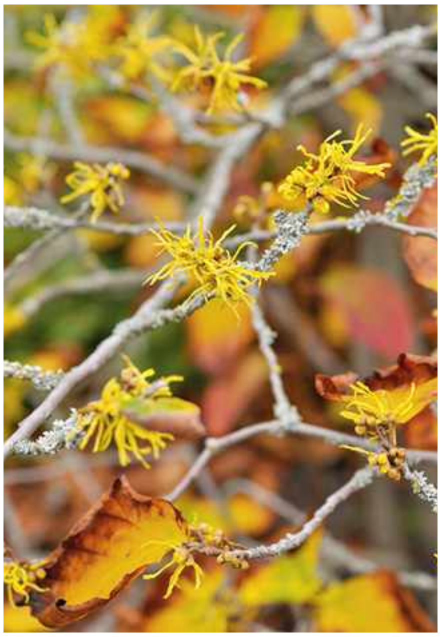
H. X *INTERMEDIA* 'ORANGE PEEL'
Its sweetly scented flowers have wider petals than most, giving the impression of a small pom-pom. Autumn foliage is as spectacular as the flowers, encompassing tones of red, orange and yellow. 3m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



H. X *INTERMEDIA* 'JELENA'
Named in the 1950s by plant breeder Robert de Belder for his wife, this is one of the most widely grown hamamelis. Although it has little scent, the warm brass-coloured flowers are enchanting. 4m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



H. *JAPONICA* 'RUBRA'
A tough and vigorous clone that forms a rounded shrub. It was selected by a French nursery a century ago for its red flowers and has been used extensively in breeding new cultivars. 3m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9a.



H. *VIRGINIANA*
Fast growing, it quickly reaches 3m tall. The flowers start to appear during autumn and are at their peak in midwinter. Not a showy plant but the flowers can be a beautiful adjunct to autumn foliage. 3m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS, LEONIE LAMBERT / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES, STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY, CAROLE DRAKE / ALAMY

Cultivation

Hamamelis are easy shrubs to grow and should do well in most gardens except those that are on shallow, chalk soil. The ideal is an acid to neutral soil (a pH of between 4.5 and 6.5) although I know gardens with a higher pH that have magnificent specimens of *Hamamelis mollis*. If they become chlorotic because of a high pH, treat them with chelated iron. (Chlorosis is a condition where the plant produces insufficient chlorophyll, resulting in yellow leaves.)

For a rounded, compact shrub, grow in an open sunny situation. Hamamelis will grow in shade but develop long shoots that make for a gangly-looking plant. Although the flowers are tough, the young foliage can be burned by strong winds, so plant somewhere sheltered.

Whatever the soil, dig in lots of organic matter: this will feed the plant and retain moisture. Although mature plants will tolerate periods of drought, young plants should be kept well watered during hot summers.

In small gardens, consider growing hamamelis in pots, which will severely restrict the size they will reach. Choose a pot at least 50cm in diameter and use a John Innes or other soil-based ericaceous compost. Keep the pot well watered during the summer and stand on pot feet so that water can drain away during the winter.

Most hamamelis cultivars are grafted on to a vigorous rootstock that will produce suckers if planted too deeply. Try not to bury the graft joint (the swollen part of the stem near the base of the plant).

Pruning

If you have the space to let hamamelis grow to their full size they need little pruning other than to take out dead wood. When you need to keep the shrub to a manageable size, prune it after flowering by cutting back that season's growth to a leaf bud. You can distinguish between leaf and flower buds by the longer, narrow shape of the leaf buds, while flower buds are round and fat.

Witch hazel

The common name, witch hazel, has no connection to sorceresses or she-devils. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* witch, or wych, refers to any tree or shrub that has pliant branches, such as the wych elm, from which bows were made. The first record of it being used to describe hamamelis wasn't until 1760, when British emigrants to North America applied it to the indigenous shrub.

Early settlers to North America used a decoction of hamamelis, made from mashing and boiling the twigs of the plant, to treat cuts, bruises and sores, and Native Americans still use it to treat swelling and inflammation. Witch hazel remains an ingredient of creams that treat insect bites and of skin lotions used to ease eczema and acne.

Collections

- **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**
  Jermyns Lane, Romsey,
  Hampshire SO51 0QA.
  Tel 01794 369317/318,
  hants.gov.uk/hilliergardens

- **Witch Hazel Nursery**
  The Granary, Cranbrook Farm,
  Callaways Lane, Newington,
  Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7LU.
  Tel 01795 843098,
  witchhazelnursery.com

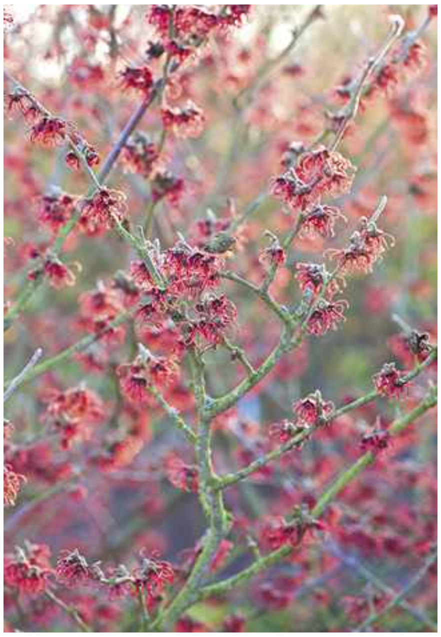
Suppliers

- **Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery**
  Annwell Lane, Smisby, nr Ashby
  de la Zouch, Derbyshire LE65 2TA.
  Tel 01530 413700,
  bluebellnursery.com
- **Junker's Nursery**
  Higher Cobhay, Milverton,
  Somerset TA4 1NJ.
  Tel 01823 400075,
  junker.co.uk

Further reading

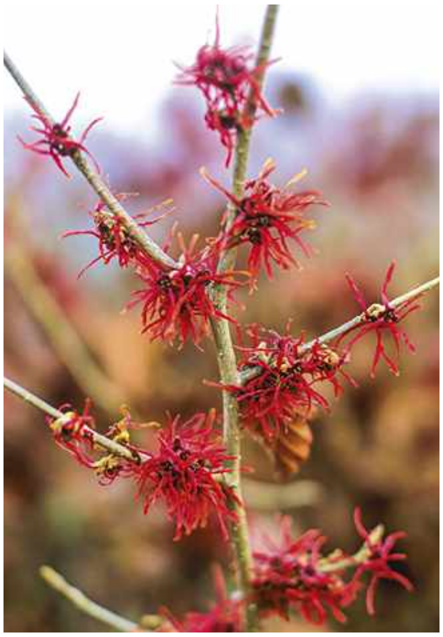
There is a very detailed monograph about the genus published by Timber Press. Called *Witch Hazels*, it is written by Chris Lane and is a Plant Collector Guide from the RHS.

Red-flowered forms



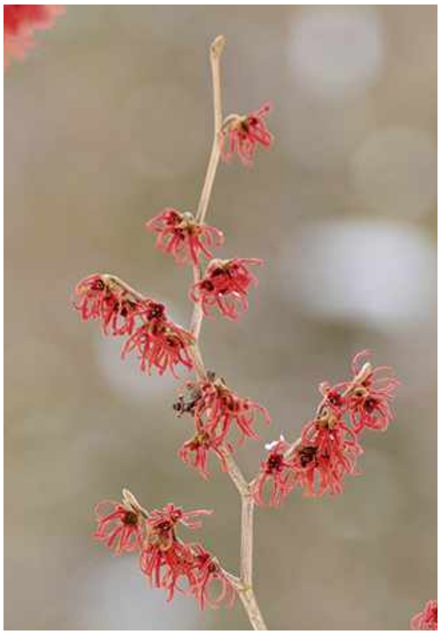
***H.* X *INTERMEDIA* 'RUBIN'**

A rounded plant with flowers that have little scent but are produced profusely from December to the end of February. Its leaves become a fiery orange in autumn. 4m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.



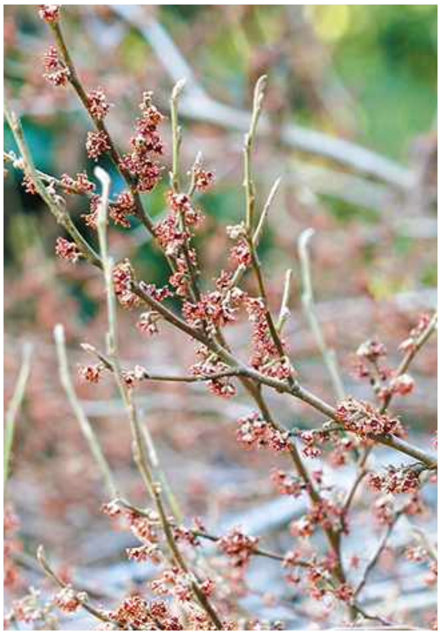
***H.* X *INTERMEDIA* 'LIVIA'**

Bred only 20 years ago this cultivar must have the most intensely red flowers of the genus. The flowers have a spicy perfume and grow in profusion from December through to March. 3.5m. RHS H7, USDA 5b.



***H.* X *INTERMEDIA* 'FEUERZAUBER'**

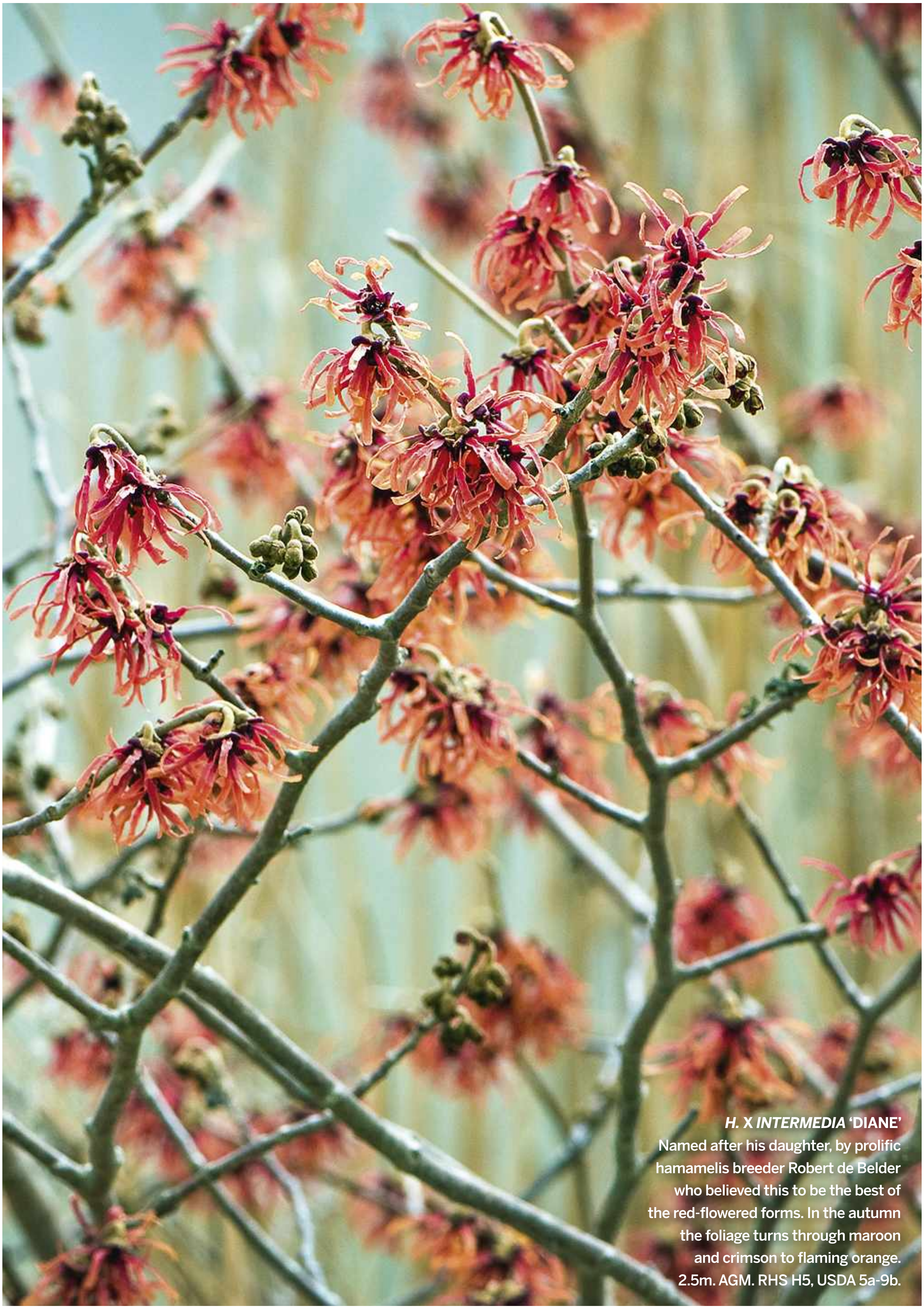
A vigorous hybrid that grows quickly and has a 3m-wide spread. The coppery-orange flowers are produced in abundance but have very little perfume. Sometimes sold as *H.* x *intermedia* 'Firecracker'. 3.5m. RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.



***H. VERNALIS* 'LOMBARTS' WEEPING'**

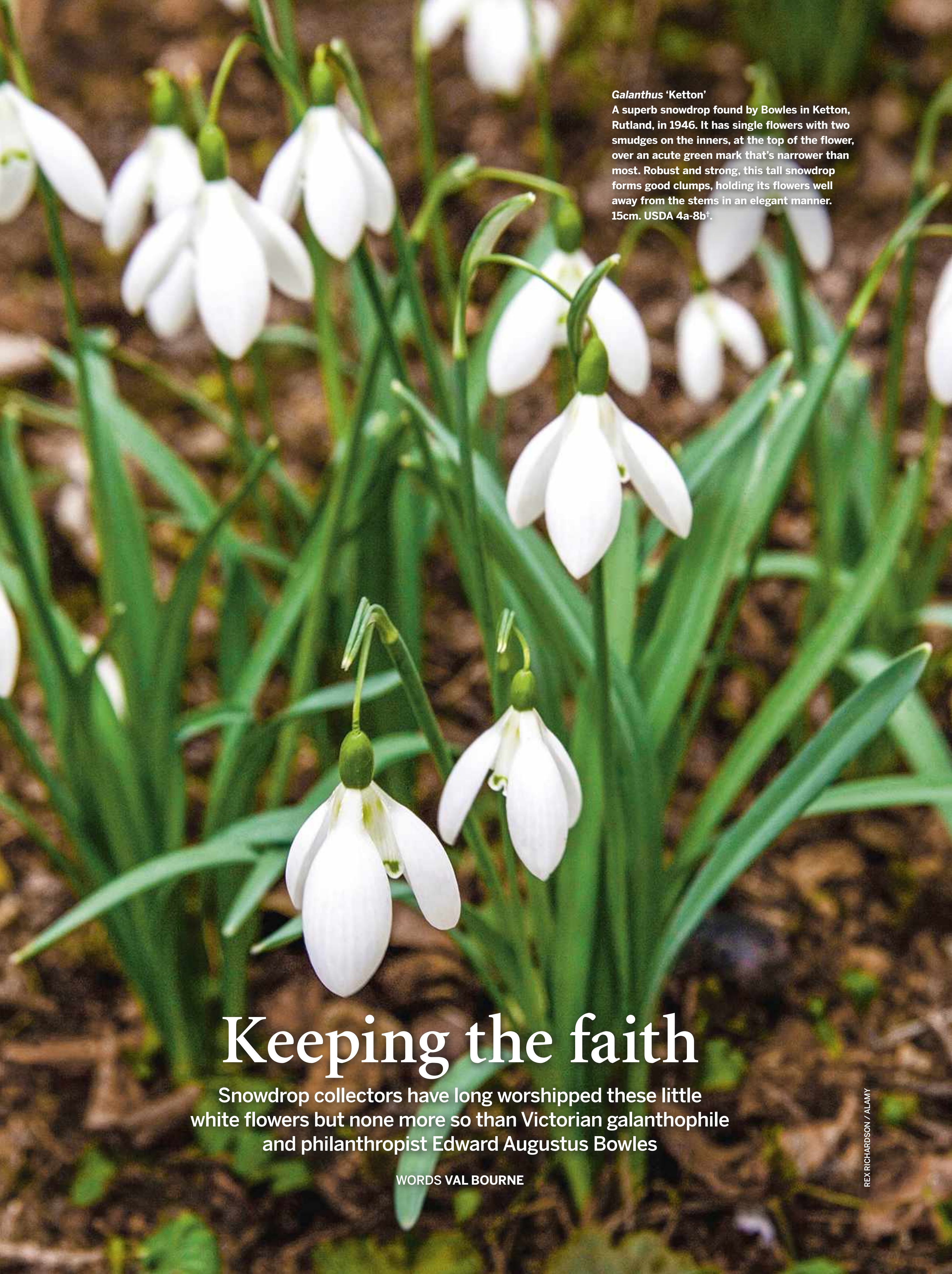
An unusual cultivar with small flowers and spreading habit with pendulous branches. It will only reach 2m tall but as much as 4m wide. The flowers, which continue into March, have a strong spicy scent. 2m. RHS H7, USDA 4a.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ELKE BORKOWSKI / GAP PHOTOS, LEIGH CLAPP / GAP PHOTOS, JOSHUA McCULLOUGH / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES, STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY



H. X INTERMEDIA 'DIANE'
Named after his daughter, by prolific hamamelis breeder Robert de Belder who believed this to be the best of the red-flowered forms. In the autumn the foliage turns through maroon and crimson to flaming orange. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

MARG COUSENS / GAP PHOTOS



Galanthus 'Ketton'
A superb snowdrop found by Bowles in Ketton, Rutland, in 1946. It has single flowers with two smudges on the inners, at the top of the flower, over an acute green mark that's narrower than most. Robust and strong, this tall snowdrop forms good clumps, holding its flowers well away from the stems in an elegant manner. 15cm. USDA 4a-8b†.

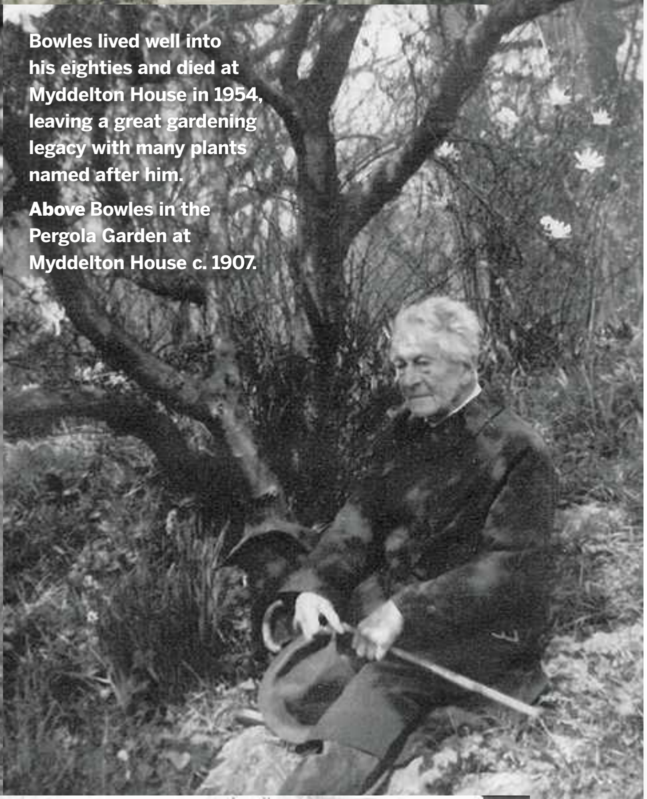
Keeping the faith

Snowdrop collectors have long worshipped these little white flowers but none more so than Victorian galanthophile and philanthropist Edward Augustus Bowles

WORDS **VAL BOURNE**

REX RICHARDSON / ALAMY

EA Bowles in 1910 with his Lakeland terrier Kim. He sometimes used his straw boater to collect blackberries.



Bowles lived well into his eighties and died at Myddelton House in 1954, leaving a great gardening legacy with many plants named after him.

Above Bowles in the Pergola Garden at Myddelton House c. 1907.

Bowles tending his garden at Myddelton House.

Right Bowles carefully numbered all of his bulbs, rather than naming them, to stop the light fingered from identifying and snatching them.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BRIGADIER ANDREW PARKER BOWLES OBE AND RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY.
IMAGE OF EA BOWLES BY UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER. THE RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY
WELCOMES ANY INFORMATION REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Most gardeners know at least one galanthophile, someone like me, who goes into overdrive in January and February through their complete obsession with snowdrops. Lots of us who meet at galas and garden gatherings to worship at the shrine of those little white flowers, and for two months or so I (and my fellow galanthophiles) think of little else. It's like an all-consuming fever.

Snowdrop mania isn't new, however. The obsession began in the mid 19th century when lots of snowdrops were introduced from the wild. Some were plundered from the Crimea by soldiers returning from the war; others were ripped from the ground by commercial bulb companies based in the Netherlands. Many found their way into grand gardens owned by the wealthy and they provoked the same sort of passion we see today. Rare bulbs often cost 7s 6d in the mid 19th century, the equivalent of three weeks wages for many. Keen growers swapped between themselves, much as they do today. However, everything changed in the early years of the 20th century when new Chinese introductions such as magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons arrived and relegated the snowdrop to an almost forgotten flower.

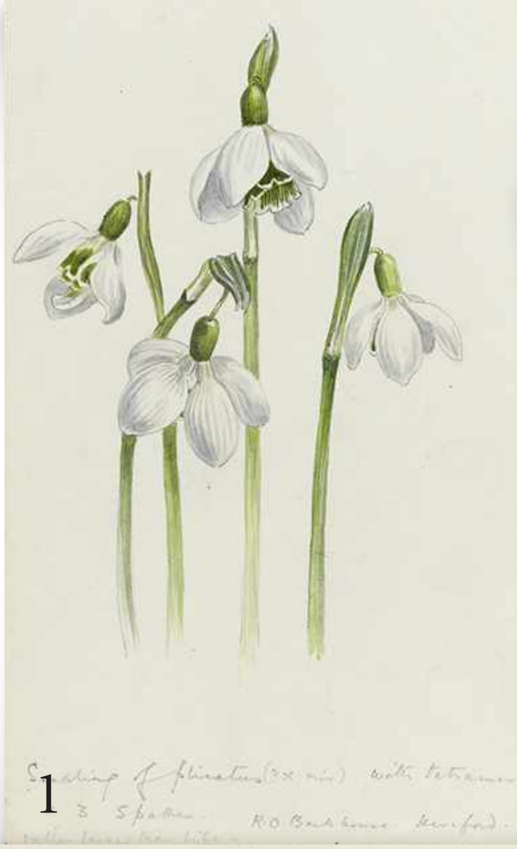
Thankfully, Edward Augustus Bowles (1865-1954) paid no heed to plant fashions and carried on collecting and growing snowdrops along with other bulbous plants, including crocus and colchicums. He was a wealthy man with a family fortune made by supplying clean water to London from the River Lee, which ran through the land of the family home – Myddelton House. As a child he was frail and was educated at home with his younger sister before going to Cambridge to study divinity. He developed a passion for natural history, be it plant, animal or mineral, and always had an acute eye for the unusual. He spotted *Carex elata* 'Aurea', a golden sedge on Wicken Fen, which became known as Bowles's golden sedge. He also collected a golden grass, *Milium effusum* 'Aureum'. He loved oddities and he was the first to grow corkscrew hazel, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', in a part of his garden called the Lunatic Asylum. Other curiosities included the hedgehog holly, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea'.

Bowles's gardening mentor was the Rev Henry Nicholson Ellacombe (1822-1916) of Bitton Grange in Gloucestershire, a distant relative who came to Myddelton House on business. Ellacombe grew snowdrops and passed them on to Bowles, who painted and drew his collection over many years. His paintings are now held by the RHS Lindley Library and they include the first spiky 'Boyd's Double'. Bowles painted this in 1910, having acquired it from a Scottish galanthophile called William Brack Boyd (1831-1918).

His paintings show virescent snowdrops and multi-petalled plicate snowdrops with six outer petals clearly visible

Bowles also grew another Scottish snowdrop distributed by Samuel Arnott and this was eventually named 'S. Arnott' by Bowles himself in 1951. His paintings show virescent snowdrops and multi-petalled plicate snowdrops with six outer petals clearly visible. Could this be the six-petalled 'EA Bowles', named a full 70 years later when it was discovered at Myddelton House by Mike Myers in 1995? Another six-petalled snowdrop has recently been named after gardener Bryan Hewitt.

Bowles wrote about some of his snowdrops in *Snowdrops and Snowflakes* by FC Stern (1884-1967), published in 1956, but his section on garden hybrids and cultivars was drastically condensed. However, the short piece does contain interesting information on several snowdrop breeders. James Allen (1832-1906) of Shepton Mallet, a wealthy ▷


Seedling of plicatus (?x niv.) with tetramer
3 spathes
R.O. Backhouse Hereford.

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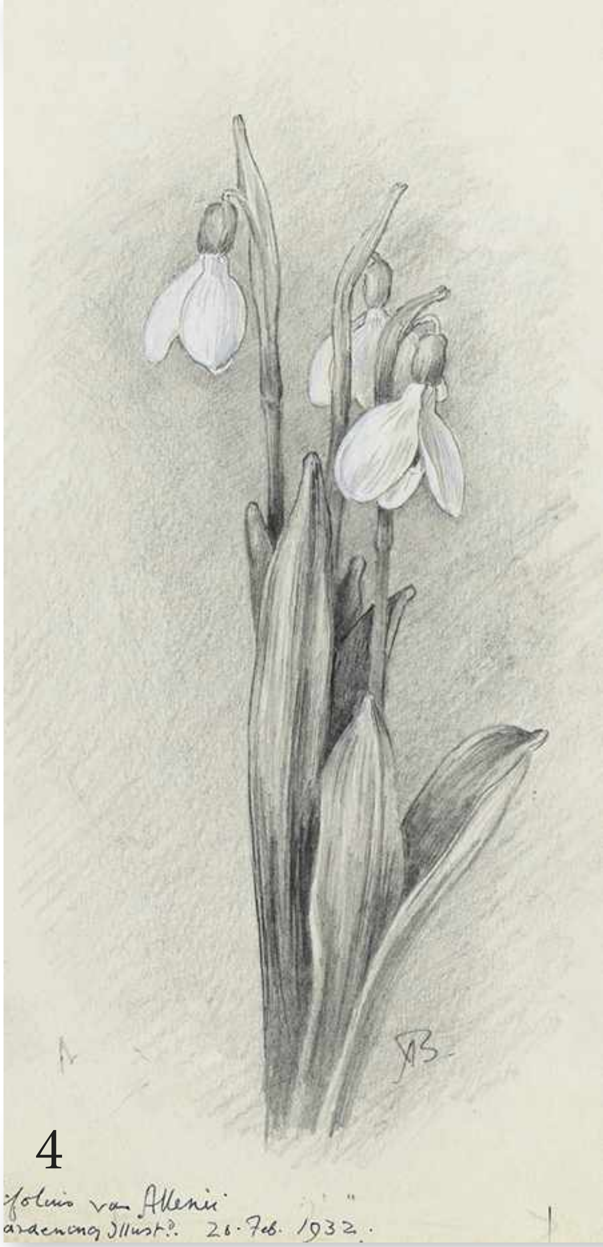

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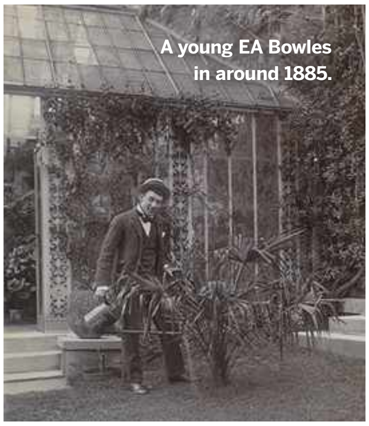
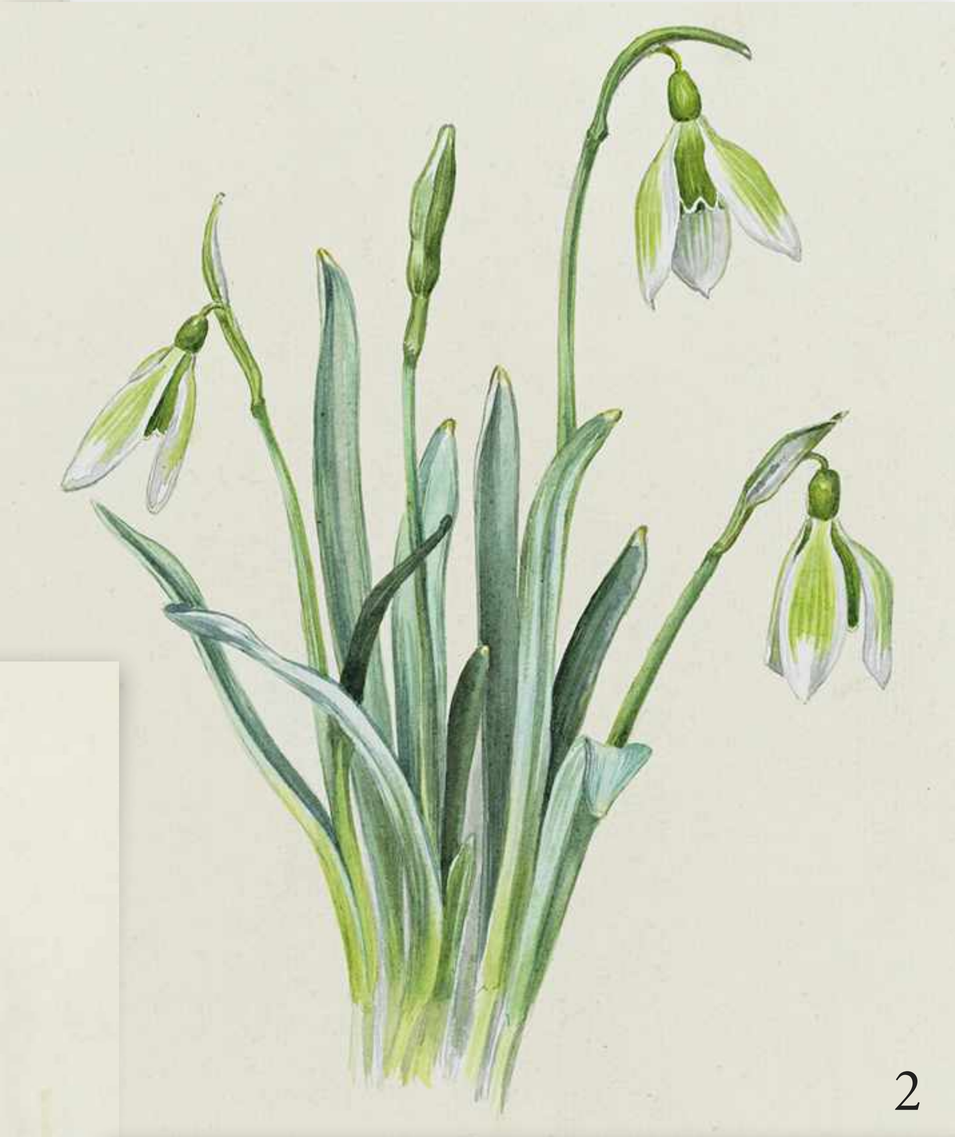


A young EA Bowles in around 1885.

Edward Augustus Bowles – the philanthropist

Bowles was a very religious man and intended to become an Anglican priest but returned home to help his family following the death of his brother and sister from tuberculosis in 1897. He immersed himself in the community by teaching at Sunday school and, at the suggestion of his father, started a night school in 1888 to teach the 'three Rs' to young men forced to leave school early for financial reasons. The Turkey House School ran in the winter months on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On the last day of term there was a prize-giving ceremony followed by rabbit supper. Bowles provided the food and entertainment, playing the piano and singing music hall songs. A small group became known as the Bowles Boys and one, Robert Sills, spotted an unusual crocus, which Bowles named 'Bobbo' in his honour. Sills eventually became a squadron leader, something he wouldn't have achieved without Bowles. One of the last surviving Bowles Boy is 94-year-old Charlie Smith. He remembers a quiet, kind and caring man who was clever, although not very practical, who "treated us as his family". Charlie joined the Myddelton House staff, acting as gardener, chauffeur and then confidante. He sat with Bowles on the night he died and on the following night too, moving into the house as a caretaker. He carried on gardening at Myddelton, working in the kitchen garden, until he was 78.

Bowles's garden staff in 1954. From left John Rogers, Sam Howard, Charlie Smith and George Tant.



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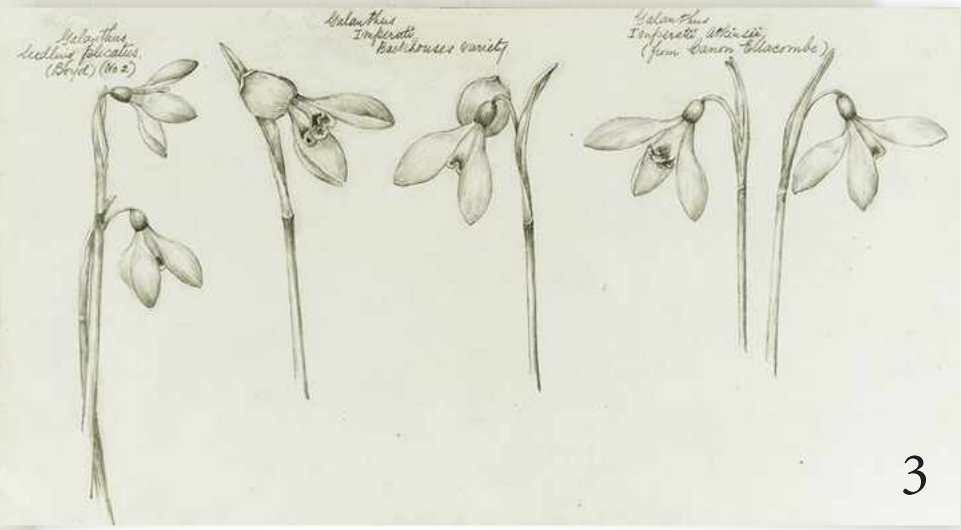

Galanthus seedling plicatus (Boyd) (No 2)
Galanthus Imperati Backhouses variety
Galanthus Imperati atkinsii (from Canon Ellacombe)

3

1 Bowles was a keen artist and over the years made many paintings of his snowdrop collection. This watercolour from 1922 shows a seedling of *Galanthus plicatus* with tetramerous (flower parts in sets of four) flowers.
2 A 1920 watercolour painting by Bowles of *Galanthus nivalis* 'Virescens'.
3 Bowles took great care in sketching the individual details of snowdrops.
4 A pencil drawing from 1932 of *Galanthus* x *allenii*.

ILLUSTRATION AND IMAGES FROM RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY; IMAGE OF E A BOWLES BY UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER. THE RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY WELCOMES ANY INFORMATION REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER

▷ mill owner's son, was known as the Snowdrop King throughout the world. Allen's home, Highfield House, is now district council offices so the garden is largely gone. Allen was an unusual galanthophile because he raised snowdrops from seeds collected mainly in his garden. Few snowdrops are raised this way. Most are spotted in situ by keen-eyed collectors and named after the place where they once grew – Bowles found 'Ketton' in a village of that name in 1946.

Allen named at least 100 of his seedlings but the collection was ravaged by narcissus fly and botrytis. His four survivors are 'Magnet', 'Merlin', 'Robin Hood' and 'Galatea' and all are still highly regarded today. Allen also had a scented snowdrop named after him, *Galanthus* x *allenii*, which Bowles painted in 1932. This hybrid bulb was collected in the Caucasus and named after James Allen in 1891 by John G Baker (1834-1920), an English botanist based at Kew.

Bowles's paintings provide a unique record of the snowdrops he grew. Some of his treasures have endured and are still widely grown today. These stalwarts make wonderful starting points for new collectors because they really make a good show. But be warned; once you start a collection, it won't be long before, like Bowles and myself, you'll find yourself completely and wonderfully obsessed. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

SUPPLIERS

AVON BULBS
Burnt House Farm, South Petherton,
Somerset TA13 5HE.
Tel 01460 242177, avonbulbs.co.uk

MYDDELTON HOUSE
Bulls Cross, Enfield EN2 9HG.
Tel 08456 770600, visitleevalley.org.uk
Open All year round and entry is free.
The Ultimate Snowdrop Sale is on
24 January from 10.30am to 12noon.

READER OFFER

Turn to page 108 for details of a snowdrop collection special offer from Avon Bulbs.

The snowdrop – a magical mystery herb

Our most common snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) isn't a native. Pollen samples have proved that it was introduced, although the exact date is uncertain. This snowdrop may have been a medicinal, all-powerful plant named moly. This was described by Homer in the *Odyssey* as the herb given to Odysseus to protect him from the goddess Circe's deadly potions. Homer describes the plant as being 'dangerous for a mortal man to pluck from the soil, but not for the deathless gods. All lies within their power. The root was black, while the flower was as white as milk; the gods call it moly'.

Two chemists, Andreas Plaitakis and Roger C Duvoisin, wrote a paper in 1983 identifying *Galanthus nivalis* as Homer's magical moly. A chemical called galantamine has been extracted and has proved so useful in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease it is now made artificially.

Medicinal plants were often grown close to monasteries and religious sites because the ancient texts were written in Latin and only accessible to the educated. At some stage, the snowdrop gained a religious significance, probably because it flowered close to Candlemas (2 February), a festival associated with the Virgin Mary. This may explain why the largest colonies of *Galanthus nivalis* are found carpeting giant swathes of land near religious locations such as Walsingham Abbey in Norfolk, Welford Park in Berkshire and Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire.

Spectacular snowdrops at Walsingham Abbey.

JOHN GLOVER / ALAMY

Bowles's enduring snowdrops

1 *Galanthus* 'Magnet'
This single-flowered snowdrop is a sterile triploid that doesn't set seed. However, the bulbs increase rapidly, forming good clumps. AGM*. 15cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b†.

2 *G. elwesii*
This handsome, bold snowdrop, which originates in the Balkans, was collected by Henry Elwes (1846-1922) of Colesbourne Park in Gloucestershire. It has large flowers and dark-green markings. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.

3 *G. plicatus* 'Augustus'
Posthumously named after Bowles, its pearl-drop flowers have a seersucker texture and the wide green foliage has a silvery stripe down the midrib. 16cm.

4 *G.* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'
A fantastic double named after a friend of Bowles, who went plant hunting with him in Greece. Unusual dainty dots on the outers. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5.

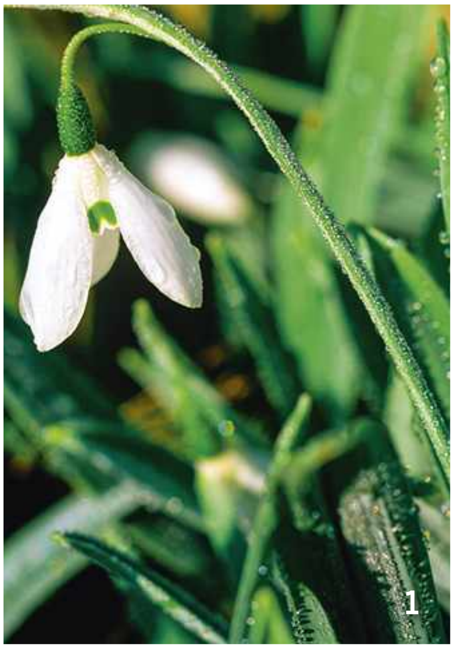
5 *G.* 'S Arnott'
This giant snowdrop, distributed by Samuel Arnott (1852-1930), provoked a new wave of galanthophilia in the late 1950s. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5.

6 *G.* 'Ophelia'
One of many Greatorex Doubles raised by the eccentric HA Greatorex in the 1940s. 15-30cm. USDA 8b.

7 *G. nivalis* 'Viridapice'
Found a century ago in northern Holland. Can be variable. Avon Bulbs has a refined form with a large spathe. 15cm. USDA 4a-8b.

8 *G.* 'Atkinsii'
Grown by Northants nurseryman James Atkins (1804-1884). It's tall and early, and bulks well, but best at the back as often ragged by the time other snowdrops flower. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

9 *G.* 'Straffan'
An Irish snowdrop that flowers late. Found in a garden in Straffan, Co Kildare in 1858. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5.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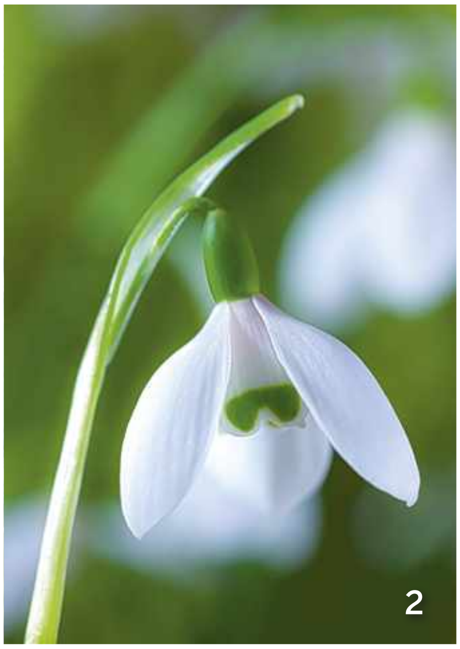
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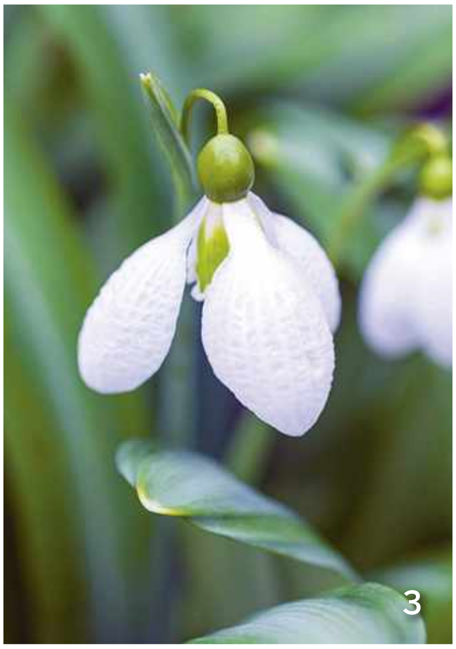
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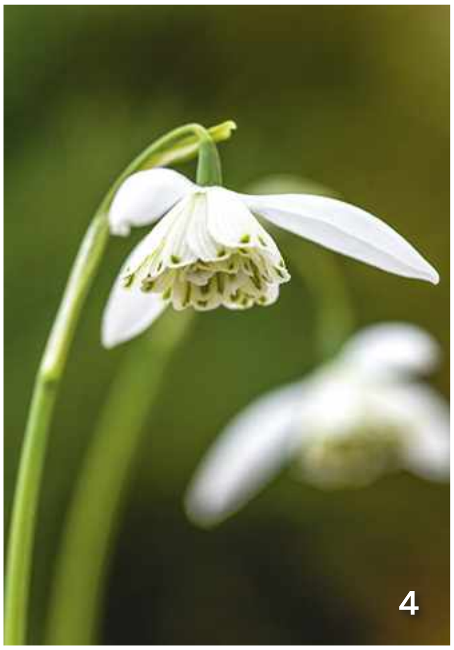
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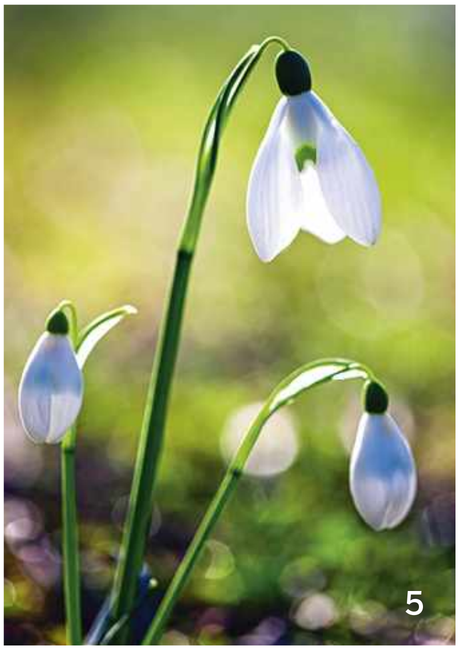
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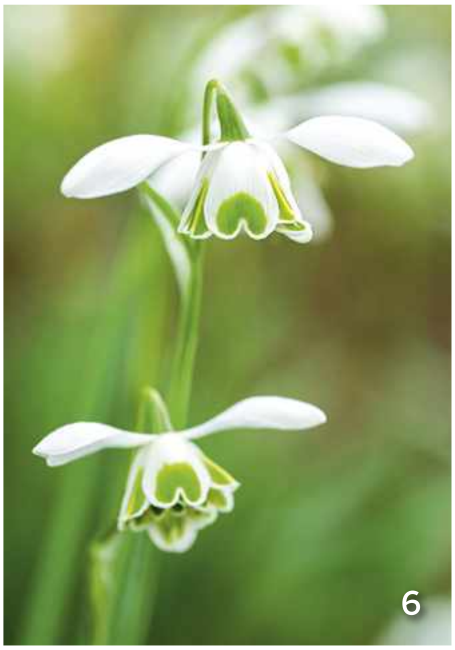
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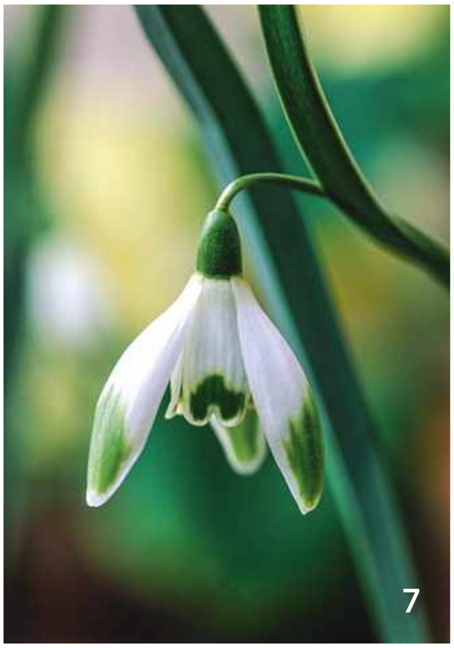
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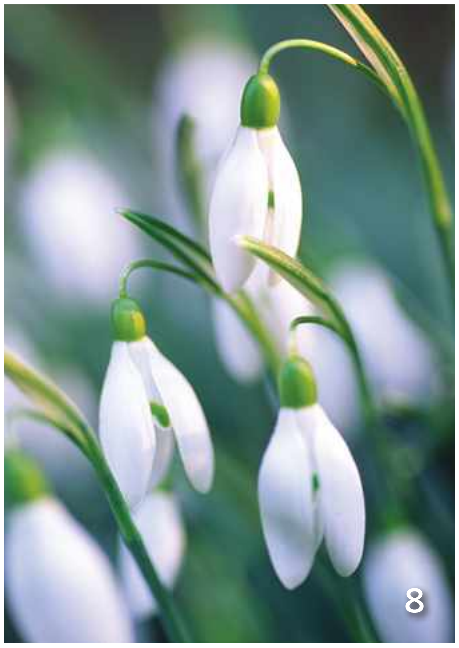
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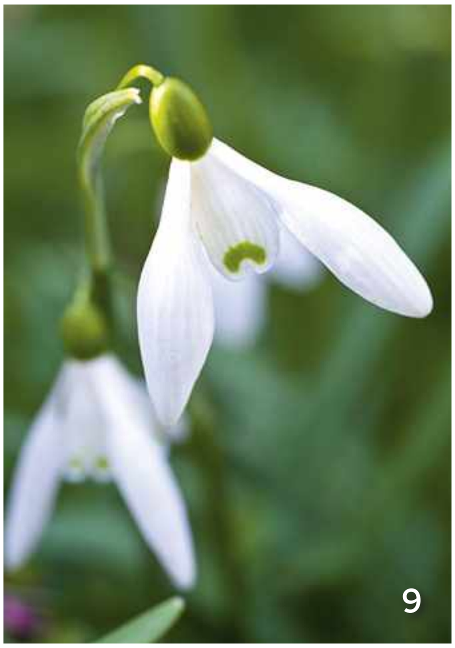
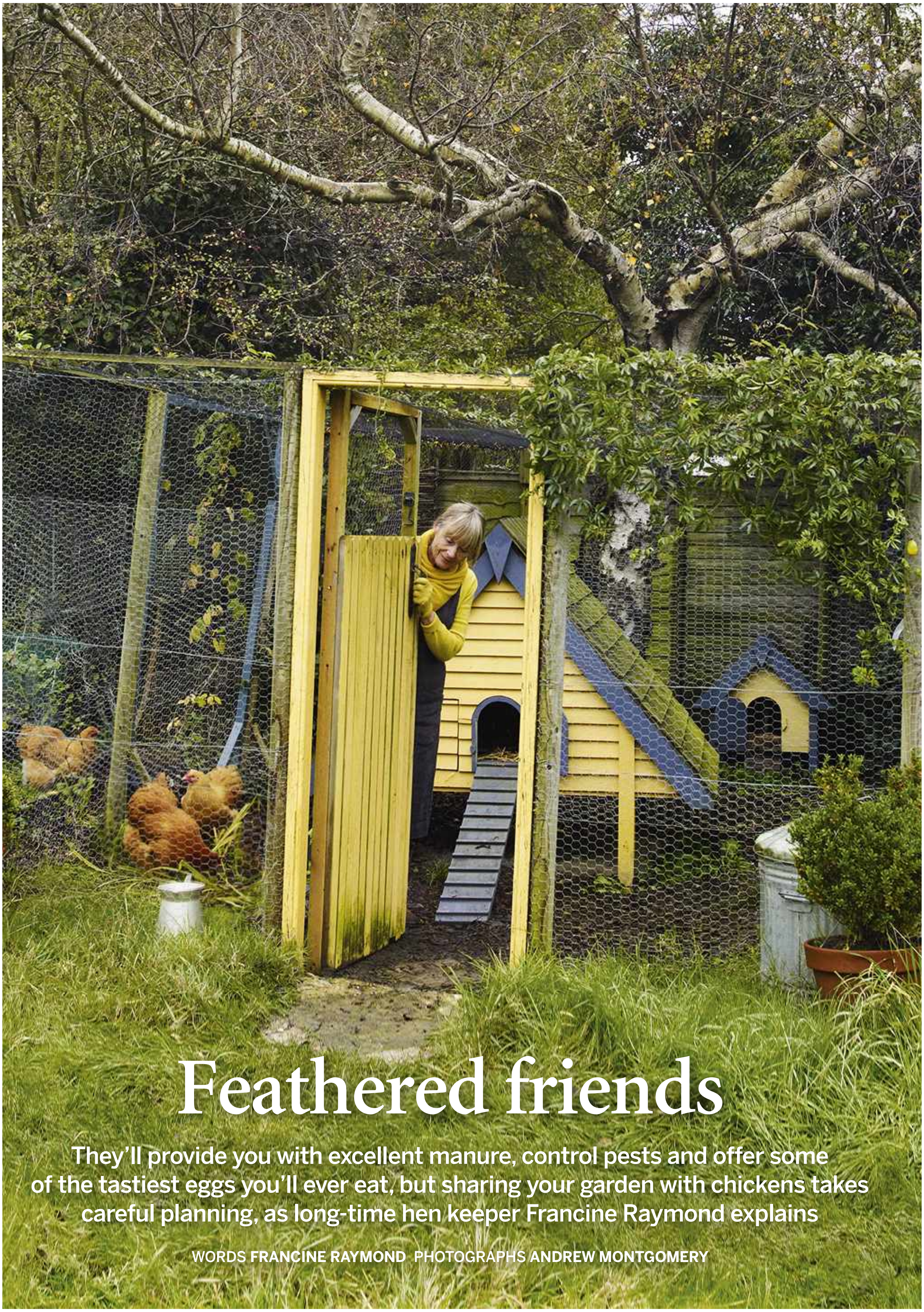

9

1 ANDREA JONES IMAGES, 2 JOHN GLOVER, 5 CHRISTINA BOLLEN, 7 JOHN GLOVER, 8 SOUTH WEST IMAGES SCOTLAND / ALL ALAMY, 3 JULIETTE WADE, 6 ELKE BORKOWSKI, 9 MARK BOLTON / ALL GAP PHOTOS, 4 TORIE CHUGG

†HARDINESS RATINGS GIVEN WHERE AVAILABLE. *HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.



Feathered friends

They'll provide you with excellent manure, control pests and offer some of the tastiest eggs you'll ever eat, but sharing your garden with chickens takes careful planning, as long-time hen keeper Francine Raymond explains

WORDS **FRANCINE RAYMOND** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Getting started

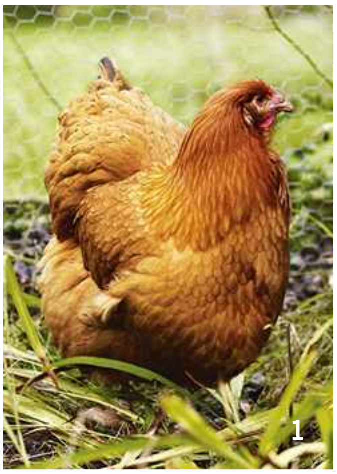
- If, despite its shortcomings, you think poultry keeping is for you, then I suggest you **go on a course, read the poultry press** and talk to other hen keepers.
- **Consult your neighbours and contact your local authority** to see if there are any contra-indications to keeping poultry. Some house leases disallow keeping livestock.
- **Choose a spot to site your chicken run, as spacious, secure and close to the house as possible.** Your birds' main enemies are uncontrolled dogs, foxes of course, badgers and, if you live by a river, mink.
- **Fence the run with weld mesh panels**. These should be folded out into an apron to prevent predators digging and, if foxes are a problem, cover the roof with fruit cage netting.
- **When buying hens, look locally first**. Ask feed merchants, go to poultry shows, read the poultry press, or go online, but always visit before buying.
- **I use flowerpot saucers for feed** (one per bird) that I clear away at night to deter vermin. Keep feed in a metal dustbin with a metal lid. Hens are omnivores. How much feed they need depends on how much access they have to your garden.
- **For easy cleaning, line your hen house floor with newspaper** – I remove the top sheet every day. Then fill the nest boxes with straw, hemp or shredded paper. Sawdust takes longer to rot down on the compost heap.

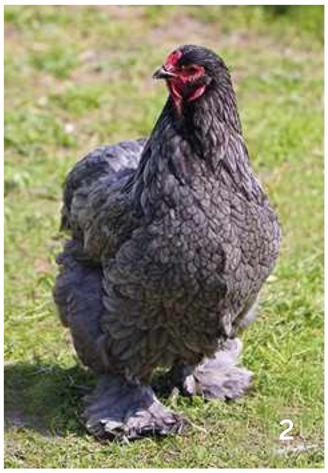
I wish I could swear hens make the best under-gardeners, but the most I can promise is they add movement, colour and drama, that my egg rack is full of the tastiest eggs and I'm never alone when gardening. Of course, it takes management to share your garden with hens, but I can't imagine mine without them.

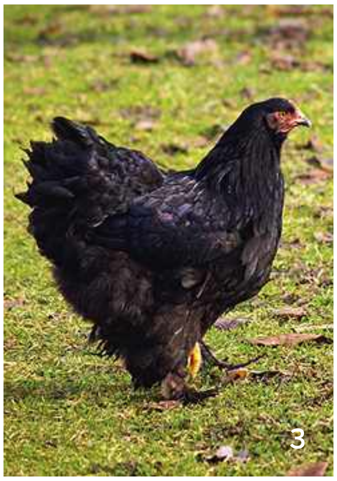
First, consider your garden. I'd never recommend those with a new garden to keep hens; wait until plants are established to a reasonable size. You'll also need to decide how big a space you can dedicate to your birds. An orchard, patch of meadow, or paddock would be ideal, but even the smallest garden can take a couple of Bantams. If you cultivate your whole plot, decide how much you are prepared to sacrifice to your flock's territory, but bear in mind, the more space you dedicate to your flock, the less you'll notice their predations.

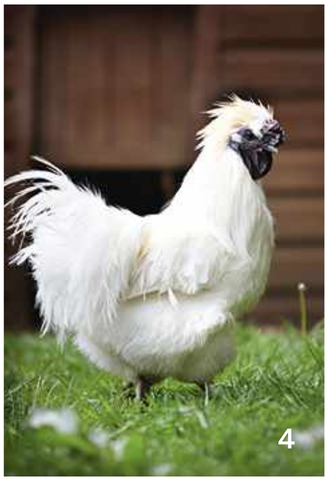
Whatever scale of keep, don't overstock and start with just a trio of hens. You're aiming to give your birds as good a life as possible, and allow them as much freedom as their safety and your gardening ambitions allow. In either case, you'll need a henhouse – a chance to show off your decorative flair – inside a secure run. You can convert an existing shed, provided it's waterproof and draught-proof, but you'll need to drill some ventilation holes above head height.

The most important decision is your choice of breed. Hens that lay a lot, eat a lot, and if what's on offer is your garden, ▷









▷ well you won't have much of your garden left. With limitless space, there's room for any birds you fancy, but with less acreage, avoid hybrids that promise an egg a day. They have voracious appetites and a short life span. Pure breeds need less space, they live longer and, because they lay fewer eggs, their appetites are smaller. If you're keeping hens in a small garden, I'd recommend the following breeds (see below left): Orpington **(1** – this is a Buff Orpington**)**, Brahma **(2)** and Cochins **(3)**, and smaller breeds, such as Pekin and Silkie **(4)**. Some hens have feathered legs, which can make them less likely to scratch in flowerbeds.

How much time you spend with your flock will depend on how much you enjoy their company, but like any creature, they need feeding, and their house must be cleaned. Keeping poultry is a great time waster, but it is time spent enjoying your garden, and it can soon develop into an all consuming passion. Children will learn a lot from your flock and with supervision it can become an absorbing hobby. Other pets may need to be trained: cats learn quickly to avoid pecking beaks, whereas some dogs may need more persuasion.

If you're keeping just a few birds, you may not notice their presence too much, but terraces will still need to be swept and paths cleaned with a burst of a high-powered hose. Droppings that fall on beds soon disappear (home-reared chicken manure is less acidic than that from commercial birds), and mixed with bedding, feathers and leftovers will turn into excellent compost.

I love the cockerel's dawn alarm, but many don't. Hens don't need a cockerel for them to produce eggs, and without crowing, there's no reason why neighbours should complain, and the occasional half dozen eggs will compensate for the odd cluck.

On to eggs. A hybrid hen will reliably lay an egg a day for a couple years, as will a pure breed hen during her first year, but in subsequent years as her laying season shortens, she'll lay less. Pure breeds won't lay at all while they are moulting (for a few weeks in late summer) or while they're broody.

I've kept a flock of Buff Orpingtons for 20 years, and can't imagine life without their charms. As in all endeavours, there'll be the odd mishap, but I make the most of the undoubted advantages. Hens are excellent pest controllers, first-class weed seed devourers, and supply the best eggs you'll ever taste. □

USEFUL RESOURSES

flytesofancy.co.uk for housing and supplies.
henkeepersassociation.co.uk for advice and support.
kitchen-garden-hens.co.uk for books, blog and courses.
poultrychat.com for help and discussion.
poultryclub.org for pure breed clubs.

• **Turn to page** 95 for our shortlist of chicken coops.

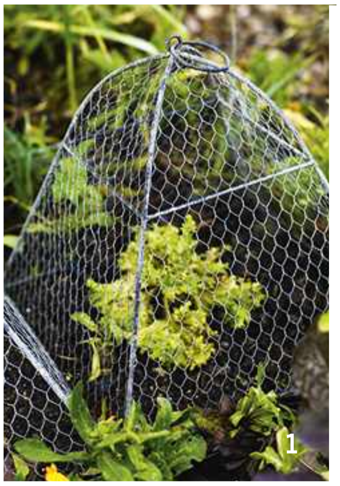
2 STEPHAN PERSCH / DPA/CORBIS; 3 ANDREA MANGONI / SHUTTERSTOCK; 4 ANDREW TWORT / ALAMY

Hens and plants

Like all of us, hens have varied appetites for plants. One bird's favourite meal is another's poison, although all greenery is appealing when young and tender. I would always cloche seedlings, fresh growth and newly planted treasures **(1)**. On the subject of poisons, hens either avoid or are not affected by plants that are dangerous to humans.

Areas of new planting and salad beds should be netted **(2)** or covered with permanent low cages **(3)**; up-turned hanging basket frames are useful. Protect the base of newly planted trees and shrubs with large pebbles or flints **(4)**. I leave perennials uncut during winter and then cut back in spring, leaving six inches of stem to protect new shoots.

To prevent unsightly pockmarks created by hens' dust bathing, it's wise to supply a purpose-built dust bath below the henhouse, by putting the building on legs and boarding the space underneath it. Fill this area with ash from a wood fire or sandpit sand.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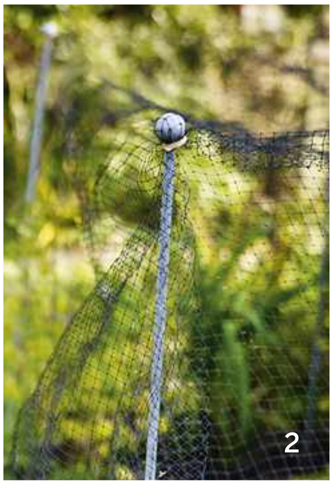
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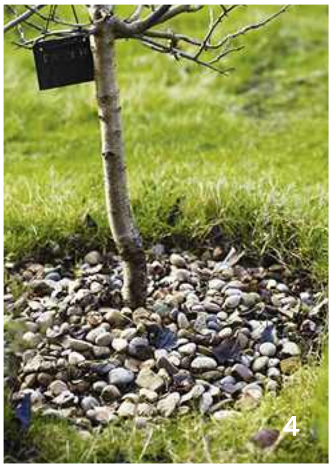
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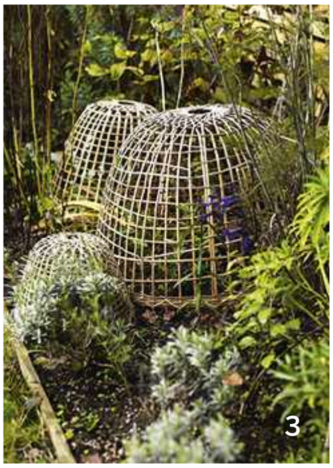
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design

Design update, ideas and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park South Park Plaza transformation won top honours at the BALI Awards, while a roof terrace (below left) and scheme by Christine Whatley (below right) also received awards.

WILLERBY LANDSCAPES

BALI AWARDS

Top of their game

Kent-based Willerby Landscapes has won the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) Grand Award for the fifth time, for its work on reshaping of the South Park Plaza at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London following the 2012 Olympics. Also honoured were Gavin Jones Ltd for its roof terrace featuring a wild flower meadow and green wall at Coca-Cola's HQ in London, which won best Green Roof, and Christine Whatley of Sylvan Studio who won the Design Excellence Award for a scheme under £50,000. **bali.org.uk**

ENVIRONMENT

Green heat

One of Scotland's most exotic gardens, Logan Botanic Garden near Port Logan in Dumfries and Galloway, has opened the first public glasshouse in the UK to be heated entirely by green energy. The heating design by Harrier Garden Developments uses two air source heat pumps, and the energy required to run this system is offset by solar panels on a nearby south-facing roof. The new Alitex glasshouse houses the garden's rare South African flower collection. **harrier-gd.co.uk**

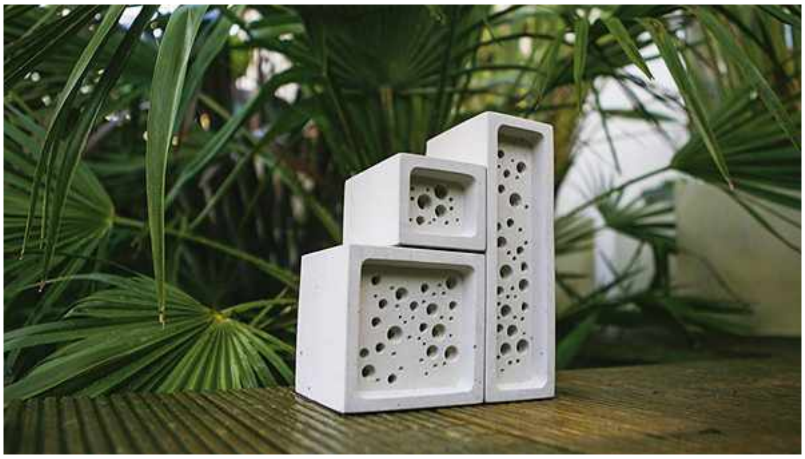
EXHIBITION

High art

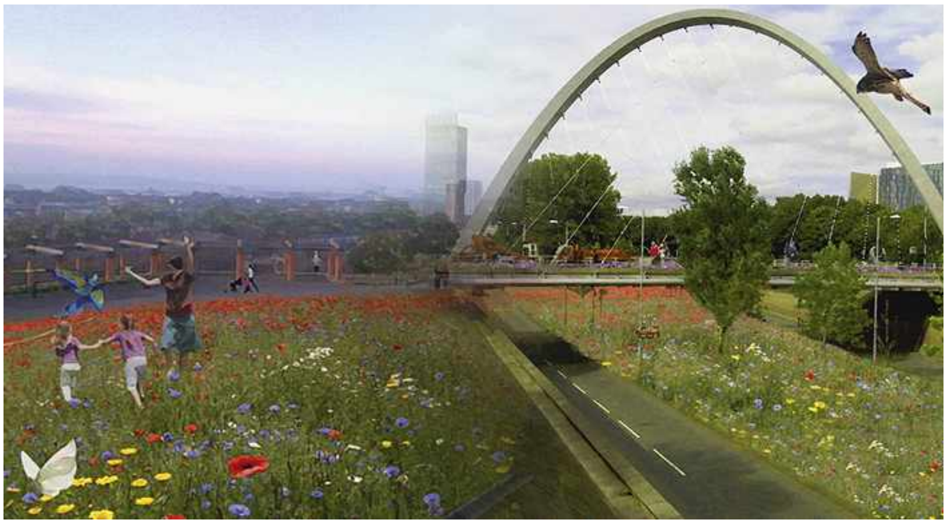
A series of abstract sculptures is currently on view along the Interim Walkway on New York's High Line. Created by Argentine artist Adrián Villar Rojas, the sculptures contain seeds and compost from other parts of the High Line and will gradually break down during 2015 and generate new growth. The Interim Walkway, a simple path through existing self-seeded plants, is at the far end of the Rail Yards. The third and northernmost point of the park, the Rail Yards opened in September and features planting by Piet Oudolf. **art.thehighline.org**

BRICK OF A BUZZ

Give bees a stylish home with a Bee Brick from the Cornwall-based design team Green&Blue. The polished cast concrete bricks are punctuated with a number of different sized cavities that provide an ideal nesting site for solitary bees. They can be stacked together, incorporated into a wall or used singly as a sculptural feature. Available in three different sizes, Bee Bricks won the Soil Association's 2014 Innovation Award. Prices start at £12 per brick. greenandblue.co.uk



TIMOTHY SCHENCK



AWARD

Go wild in the cities

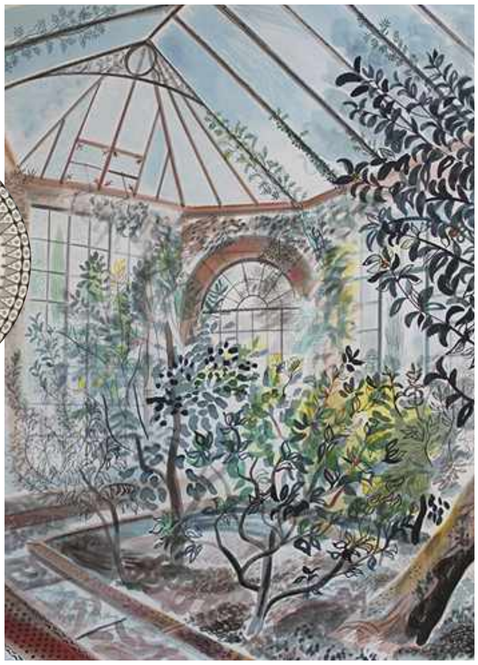
A Tale of Two Cities, a scheme to brighten neglected spaces in both Liverpool and Manchester with swathes of wild flowers, has won the £120,000 Grow Wild England flagship award. The project will also receive a further £15,000 to continue wild flower activities, especially with young people, during 2016. Grow Wild is a four-year programme led by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and supported by the Big Lottery Fund, to create wildlife-friendly wild flower havens in our communities. **growwilduk.com**

IN THE COUNTRY
IN THE TOWN

EXHIBITION

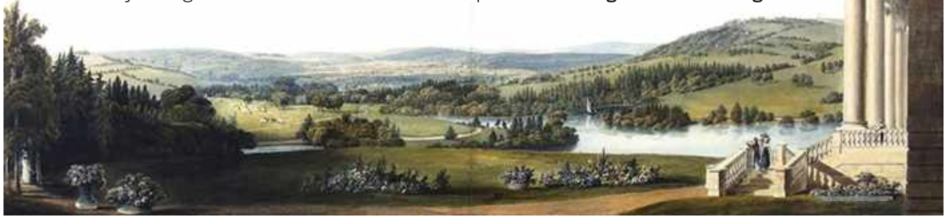
Designs for life

There's still time to catch Town and Country the solo exhibition of talented artist and illustrator Emily Sutton at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Emily's work is inspired by the landscape of her native Yorkshire as well as her recent travels to France and all display her love for pattern and colour. Until 22 February. **ysp.co.uk**



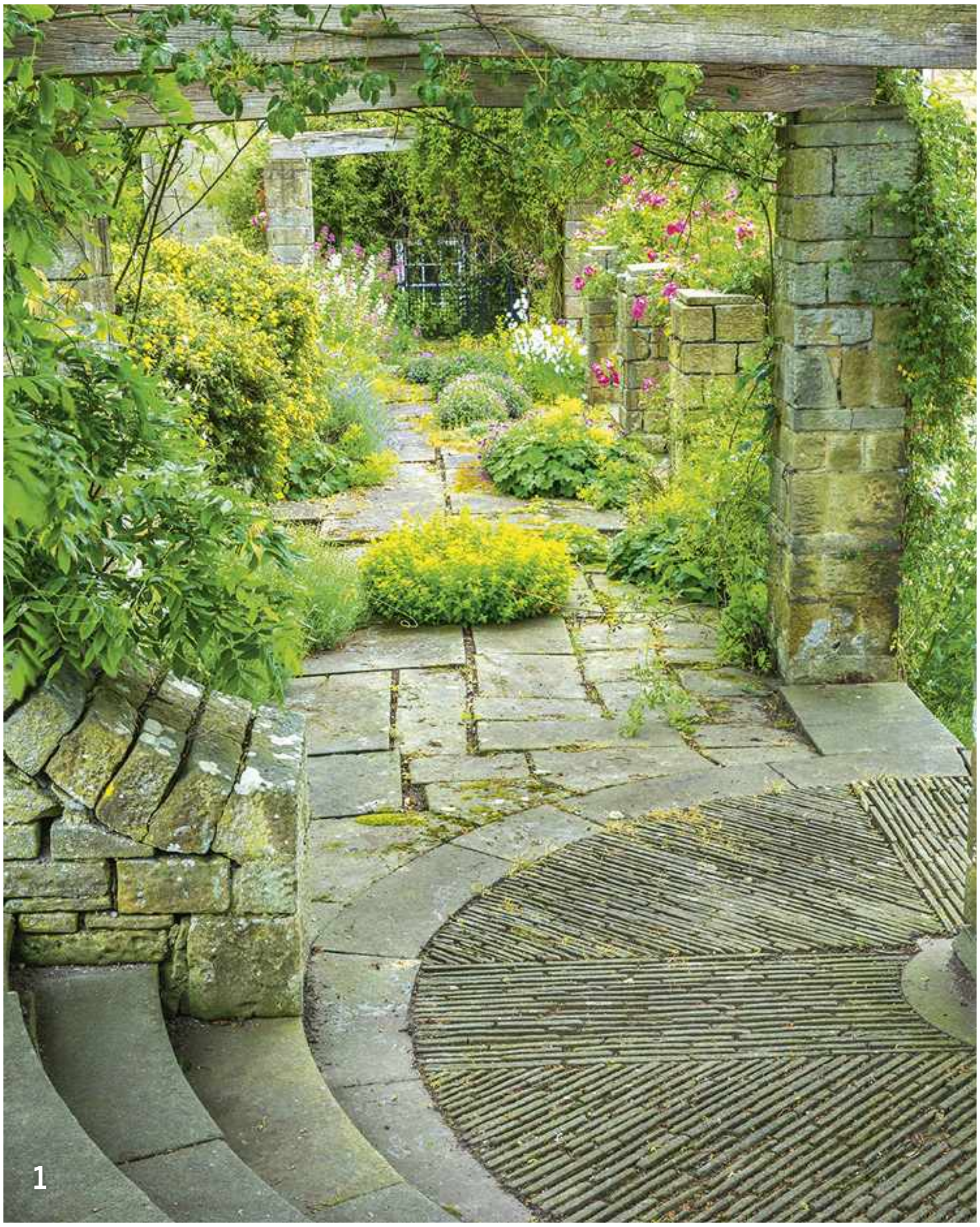
WATER WORLDS

With a pledge of more than £300,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Botanic Garden of Wales is embarking on an ambitious project to restore its 568-acre site at Middleton Hall in Carmarthenshire to its Regency glory. It plans to recreate the necklace of lakes, cascades, falls and weirs that 200 years ago made this one of the finest water parks in Britain. **gardenofwales.org.uk**



Notebook

- **The Landscape Institute** has launched a new website to provide all the information a budding landscape architect needs, including links to courses at all its accredited schools in the UK. bealandscapearchitect.com
- **Richard Beales**, heir to the Peter Beales Roses nursery and designer of the Beales stand at Chelsea for the past 20 years, has set up his own garden design company. Tel 01953 453210; richardbealesdesign.com
- Pocket parks and community allotments, as well as large-scale landscape projects such as King's Cross and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, are explored in the **Rethinking the Urban Landscape** exhibition at The Building Centre, Store St, London WC1E 7BT, until 10 February. buildingcentre.co.uk
- Online registration has opened for this year's **Chelsea Fringe**, the alternative garden festival that celebrates gardens, gardening, community growing initiatives and outdoor performance, which runs from 16 May to 7 June. Now in its fourth year the festival is open to individuals, groups and organisations. Email info@chelseafringe.com if you want to get involved. chelseafringe.com
- Book now to attend an **international conference** 'Landscape, Wilderness and the Wild', on concepts of wilderness, wildscape and re-wilding at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, 26-28 March. ncl.ac.uk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1 Harmony

To create a cohesive design, make sure that the materials you select for paving and walling link to the style of the house and period of the garden. At Whalton Manor Gardens in Northumberland the pergola, steps and terrace are constructed from the same stone, creating a sense of unity and harmony.

MARIANNE MAJERUS, WHALTON MANOR GARDENS, NORTHUMBERLAND.

The hard stuff – garden materials

From paving to pathways, when it comes to hard landscaping in the garden it is important to consider quality, style, purpose and price

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE

Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Co-ordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio.

2 GAP PHOTOS. 3 JENNY LILLY / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN / JADE GOTO AND ARMANDO RAISH.
4 CHARLES HAWES / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGNER / LUCIANO GIUBBILEI, SPONSOR / CHAMPAGNE LAURENT-PERRIER

2 Softening the edges

Plants spilling over the edges of the paving help to soften the lines of hard landscaping. Take this idea even further and encourage plants to grow in crevices and cracks between the paving. However, make sure you design the paths so that they are wide enough to accommodate the plants.

3 Pocket garden

It is not unusual to see plants being used to fill small gaps on a stone terrace or pathway but here the same idea has been employed on decking. The designer has deliberately cut out rectangular pockets and planted them with succulents. This has a more contemporary feel.

4 Celebration of stone

This stunning 2014 Chelsea show garden by Luciano Giubbilei for Laurent-Perrier won a Gold Medal and Best in Show. The hard landscaping was perfectly proportioned. A crystal-clear water feature shows off the steps descending into the pool.

Hard landscaping describes the built elements in a garden. In other words anything that is not soil, planting or turf. It's likely to be the most expensive part of a garden project and it's therefore essential you make the right choices. Before you decide on materials you should carefully consider the site, house and locality, and try wherever possible to use materials that connect with the local building vernacular. If you can't find an exact match, then try to limit the number of different materials and colours within a scheme, otherwise it can look out of place.

Budget is often a deciding factor when selecting hard materials as is whether the products have been ethically produced. The good news is that in recent years the market has changed dramatically; now it is possible to find a wide range of products to suit most budgets and you can trace exactly where and how the materials have been produced.

Although there are several material options available, stone remains one of the most popular choices, and comes in many guises. What's more, the quality of reconstituted stone is better than ever; sometimes it's so good it's difficult to distinguish it from natural stone. Whatever material you choose, you'll need to ensure it is fit for purpose. For example, in a shady location where algae is likely to build up you'll need to ▷

5 Sett in stone

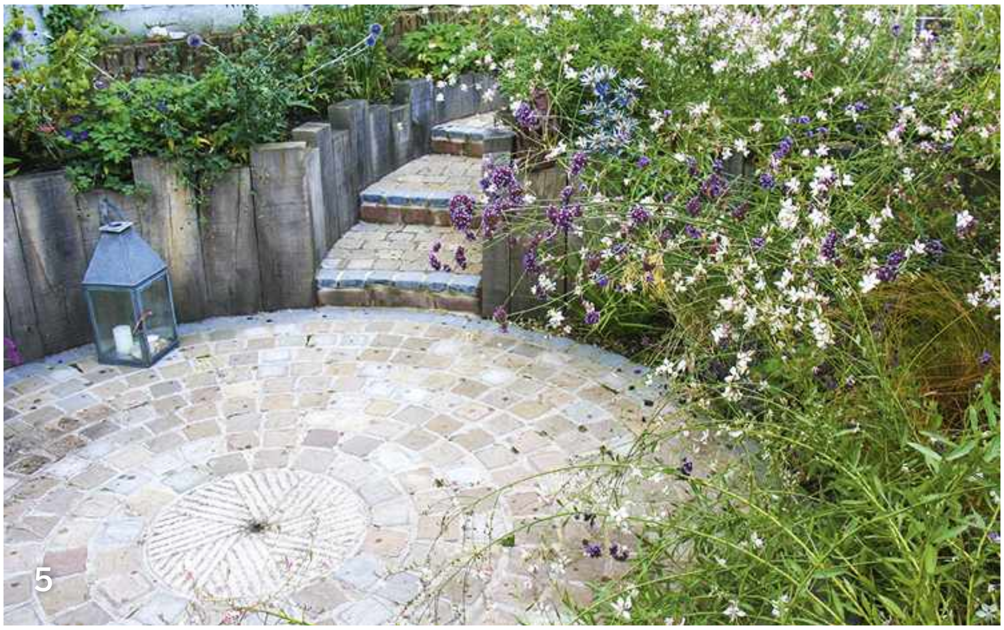
Smaller stone setts are perfect for creating circular patios or curved paths. In this tiny garden I have used them to create two separate, circular sitting areas and also for a flight of curved steps. At the centre of each circle I have placed a decorative millstone.

6 Directional decking

The way in which a material is laid can strongly influence how people move through a garden. If you want people to walk through a space, then lay the material using a strong directional design. This decking, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith, invites people to cross the water feature and discover what lies beyond.

7 Grate ideas

Gravel is a loose material that can easily get kicked around. This design by Jeni Cairns and Sophie Antonelli uses metal grating to anchor the gravel firmly in place. One of the many clever ideas in a garden that won a gold medal and Best Summer Garden at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2014.



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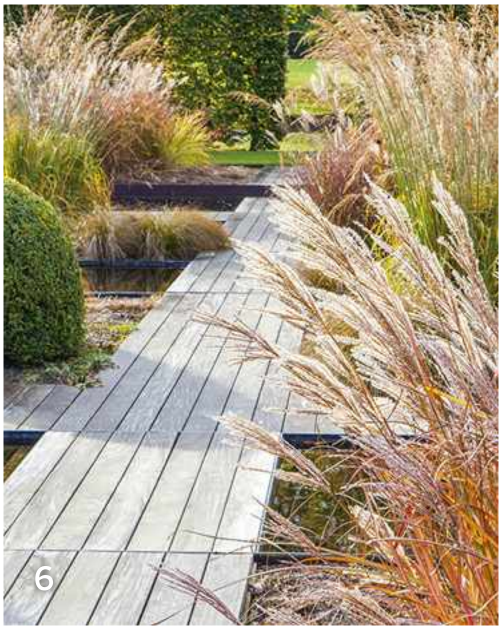

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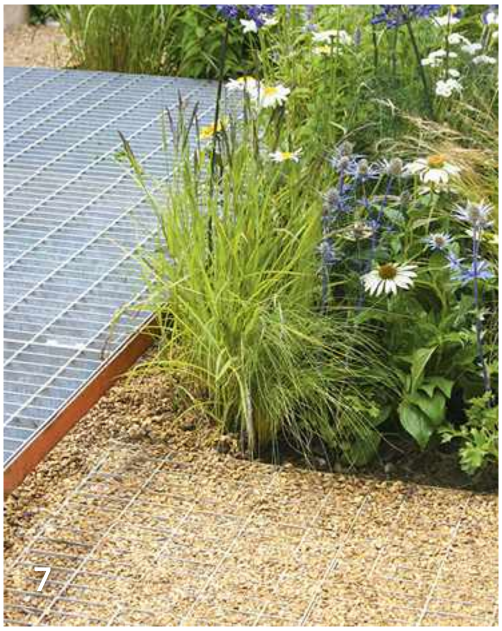

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6 MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN / TOM STUART-SMITH, 5 & 7 ANNIE GUILFOYLE

▷ use a textured stone for paving otherwise it could become extremely slippery. The minimum stone thickness you should opt for is 25mm, but this is just for areas, such as paths or patios, where you are only going to walk. On driveways, the thickness of the stone should be closer to 60mm to support a vehicle's weight. Don't be tempted to cut corners on quality; if the price of stone appears too good to be true, then it probably is. It is most likely to be very thin and susceptible to cracking and chipping.

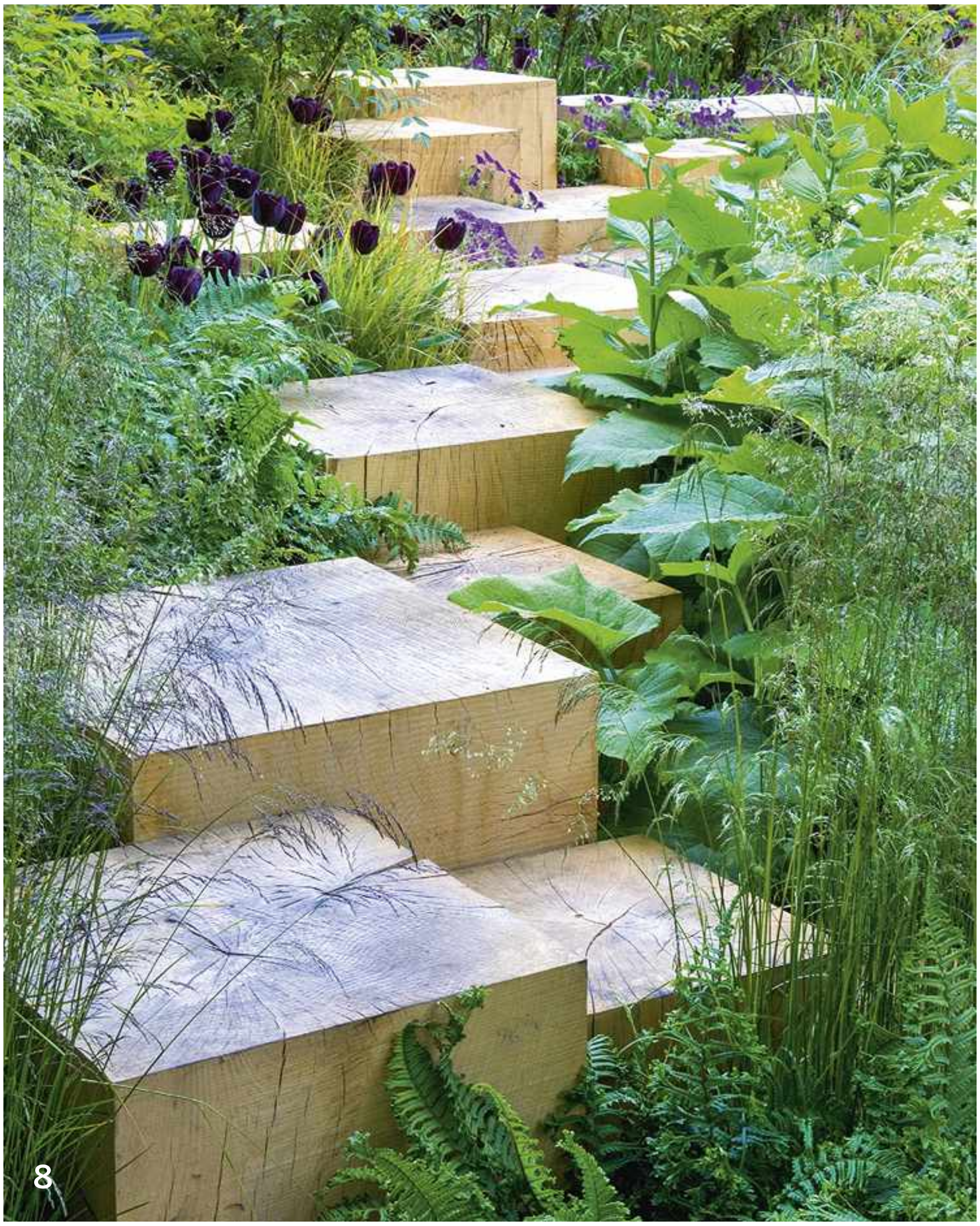
Most stone suppliers will offer you sound advice on the quantity required and also suggest laying patterns. But, it is essential you look at samples before choosing the paving and to ask how much colour variation there will be within one batch. Very often this is not discussed and can be quite surprising, once the stone has been delivered and unpacked. It is also a good idea to wet the stone sample to see if there is any colour change, as it could appear either much brighter or darker when it rains.

Before you employ a contractor, you should go and see their previous work and speak with the clients. That way you can be confident that you have just the right person doing the job. □

NEXT MONTH Topiary.

READER EVENT

Annie Guilfoyle will be explaining how to overcome the challenges of designing a small garden at the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival in April. For details see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**



PHOTOGRAPHER / LIZ EDDISON, DESIGNER / ANDY STURGEON - CHELSEA 2005

8

8 Step up to the mark

Wood is one of the best natural materials to use in a garden and over time it fades to a warm, silvery-grey colour. Andy Sturgeon's inspiring design features undulating oak cubes set into exuberant planting; it encourages exploration into the garden but also has a sculptural value of its own.

Stone and paving suppliers:

The following companies have useful and informative websites:

- **ced.ltd.uk**
- **londonstone.co.uk**
- **marshalls.co.uk/homeowners**

Ten top tips for choosing and using the right paving materials in your garden

- To make a space seem larger, use smaller-sized paving, as the quantity of slabs will trick your eyes into thinking it's bigger.
- For good drainage, always lay paving with a slight fall to ensure that storm water runs off either into beds or drains.
- Think imaginatively and create subtle patterns in the paving by using a different size or texture of the same stone.
- When using reclaimed paving, make sure you know exactly what the quality will be when it arrives, as it may take a lot of time to clean and prepare, which could mean higher labour costs than expected.
- Leave small pockets for planting within a large area of terrace – this will help to soften the harshness of the overall look.
- Always use a textured stone in areas that could become hazardous if slippery, such as steps and ramps, so there is more grip.
- Try to see the paving that you've chosen laid out in a supplier's showroom before you decide, as it will always look different in a larger area than a small sample.
- You will need to order between five and ten per cent more than the amount you require to allow for wastage and cutting.
- If you want to use the same stone inside and out, remember the exterior stone will weather and discolour so it won't stay the same colour as the interior one.
- Choose whether you want the paving to be mortar jointed or butt jointed. However, this will influence the type of stone you need so it is best to discuss this with the supplier and contractor before ordering.

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COMPILED BY ROSANNA MORRIS

Education guide

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Image: C.F.S Gdn by Graduate Jo Thompson

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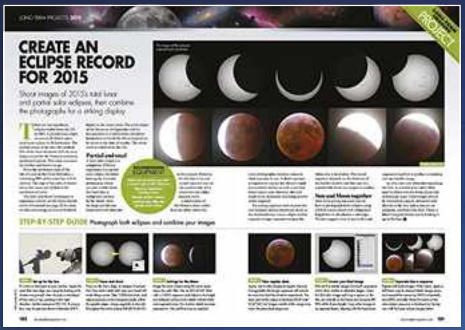
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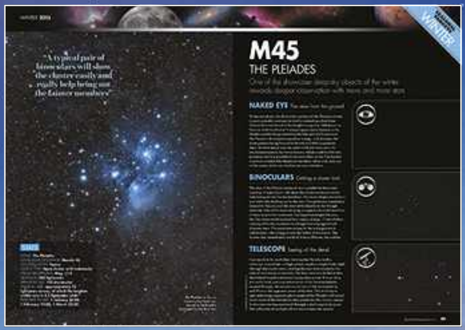
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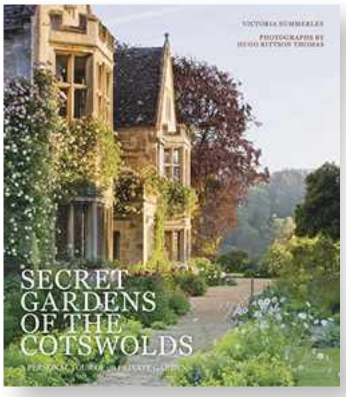
Downtools

Book reviews, reader offers, crossword, back issues

Stowell Park in Yanworth is one of the hidden delights waiting to be discovered in *Secret Gardens of the Cotswolds*, reviewed on page 102.

HUGO RITTSON-THOMAS

Book reviews


VICTORIA SUMMERLEY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY HUGO RITTSON THOMAS
SECRET GARDENS OF THE COTSWOLDS

SECRET GARDENS OF THE COTSWOLDS
by Victoria Summerley,
photography by Hugo Rittson-Thomas

Frances Lincoln, £20
ISBN 978-0711235274

A beautifully illustrated book that offers an insider's view of some of the Cotswolds' most beautiful private gardens.

Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

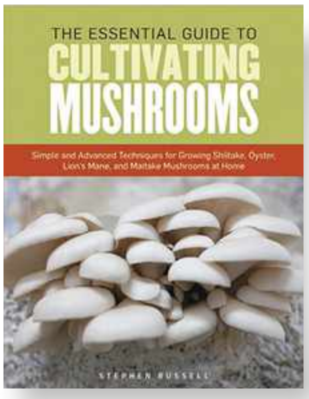
It's always dangerous to use the word 'secret' in the title of a gardens book, because clever-clogs reviewers tend to relish puncturing that particular hyped-up balloon. In this case the balloon deserves to be deflated only a little, because there are a number of genuinely little-known gardens among the 20 featured in this spiritedly written book. One or two of these gardens appear to have had a lot of money expended on them but rather less imagination and originality – something of a Cotswolds tradition. But the majority are a delight.

Among the novelties are Kingham Hill House, which features a dramatic formal cascade and immaculate plantings by Rupert Golby, working over original designs by Rosemary Verey, whom he has succeeded as the doyen of Cotswolds garden design. Cornwell Manor is an interesting design by Clough Williams-Ellis, while Burford Priory can boast an Antony Gormley figure on its lawn.

But before you start firing up the Sat-Nav, a quick check at the back of the book reveals that these are among six described as (their capitals): 'NOT open to the public.' Another eight are open just one or two days a year. No matter – we cannot have everything on a plate. Among the gardens added to my to-do list are Rockcliffe, with deep borders and exuberant topiary (including eight chicks on a slope up to the dovecote), and Asthall Manor, once home of the Mitfords and now of Rosie Pearson, who has commissioned Julian and Isabel Bannerman to create suitably romantic plantings amid formal elements.

This is not just another picture book, but a useful guide and aide-mémoire for the seasoned garden visitor. It proves that this most gone-over part of England still has new garden treasures to reveal to us.

Book offer
RRP £20. **Reader offer price £18** including p&p.


THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO
CULTIVATING MUSHROOMS
Simple and Advanced Techniques for Growing Shiitake, Oyster, Lion's Mane, and Maitake Mushrooms at Home
STEPHEN RUSSELL

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CULTIVATING MUSHROOMS
by Stephen Russell

Storey Publishing, £17.99
ISBN 978-1612121468

Everything the would-be mushroom grower needs to know from the very basic methods to more advanced commercial practices.

Reviewer Andy Hamilton is an author and forager.

It is always a joy to read a book written by someone who is not just an expert but an enthusiast and Russell is such an author. By his own admission, mushroom cultivation has changed his life. He now runs a mushroom-growing company and gives talks about the subject across the USA. Essentially this book is that expert knowledge distilled, full of his cultivating experiments that have been refined and honed over the years.

I have limited mushroom-growing experience, I was gifted a kit that grew one mushroom then failed to grow any more. Within moments of picking up this book I've found out where I went wrong and how to rectify it. This is not only because of the non-technical and easy-to-read manner of Russell's writing but because the book is laid out in such a way that it's simple to find the information you need. The simple bit of advice I gleaned is that he grows all of his mushrooms indoors, something that will improve your chances of cultivating success tenfold.

You might think you need some kind of laboratory or special conditions to work with such delicate spores. But Russell shows some ingenious techniques using household objects – how to make a spore print using tin foil and an upside down tumbler stands out for me. There are also some fun experiments and I'm keen to have a go at growing some oyster mushrooms on a wet toilet roll.

For some of the cultivation you do need laboratory conditions and Russell offers an ingenious solution, constructing a sterile glove box – the kind you imagine might exist in a nuclear facility – from materials easily found in a pound shop. It's hard to find fault with this guide; he has covered every base. I've no doubt that if you follow Russell carefully you could be selling mushrooms at your local farmers' market within a year.

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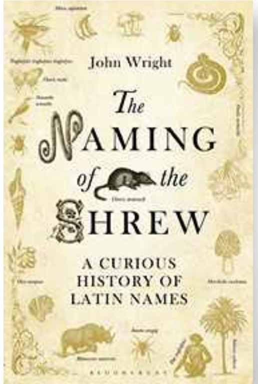
RRP £17.99. **Reader offer price £15.99** including p&p.



THE NAMING OF THE SHREW: A CURIOUS HISTORY OF LATIN NAMES

by John Wright

Bloomsbury Publishing, £14.99
ISBN 978-1408816981

A book that combines science, language and history to explore the complex and fascinating world of taxonomy in nature.

Reviewer Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

There are many books that tell you that *hirsutus* means hairy and *elatus* means tall but *The Naming of the Shrew* takes the subject of Latin – or more correctly, Latinised – names in nature several stages further. Natural historian and mycologist John Wright has published three foraging handbooks in the River Cottage series, and he regularly leads groups of happy foragers on forays into nature.

In this book the reader is taken on a foray of a different kind, into the complex world of taxonomy. Latin names, the author says, ‘are beautiful, fascinating, often amusing and always useful’, helping us to claw at least some sense of order out of the complexities of the natural world around us.

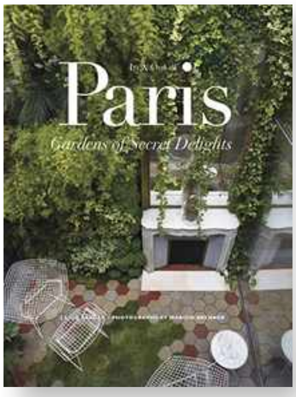
Clearly the pitfalls of trying to impose order upon what he terms ‘the fundamental messiness of nature’ are numerous. As he leads us through the history and language, helping us to pick our way between the minefield of suffixes, prefixes and affixes, he spotlights some priceless blunders. When Darwin brought back a new hydrangea specimen from Chile, he failed to mention that it had been nibbled by pests and it became known as *Hydrangea serratifolia* (with serrated leaves) despite its entirely smooth-edged leaves.

We may never arrive at a perfect system upon which all natural scientists can agree, but we have come a long way since the early days of the *scala naturae*, which ‘suggested that everything was arranged in one long line with God at one end and rocks at the other’.

This is a learned little book, detailed enough to appeal to serious horticulturists and botanists, but is lightened by the author’s sense of fun. I liked his advice on pronunciation: ‘Use straightforward intimidation and pronounce very loudly and with enormous confidence’.

Book offer

RRP £14.99 each. **Reader offer price £13.29** including p&p.



IN & OUT OF PARIS: GARDENS OF SECRET DELIGHTS

by Zahid Sardar, photography by Marion Brenner

Gibbs M Smith, £32
ISBN 978-1423632702

Lavishly illustrated book about the private gardens and some public spaces in Paris, mainly created by modern garden designers.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a writer and plantsman.

For 300 years France has seen the creation of innovative gardens but little has been written about their creators. This well-researched book sets out to change this.

The first part sets the historical background of French garden design by looking at half a dozen important gardens on the outskirts of Paris, beginning with Vaux-le-Vicomte. It was here that the 17th-century garden designer André Le Nôtre was given free rein to develop ideas about garden design that he would later use at Versailles and the Tuileries, and which would influence garden making throughout Europe. The book points out that the evolution of the Tuileries over several centuries has influenced garden trends throughout France, right up to the recent renovations carried out by designers Jacques Wirtz and Pascal Cribier.

The bulk of the book describes projects by contemporary designers in central Paris on rooftops, terraces, balconies and other spaces hidden away in the city, opening up these usually private places and describing the work of their designers. Here are the familiar green walls from Patrick Blanc and the volcanic craters on roof terraces from Hugues Peuvergne – a startling folly by architect André Bloc from the 1950s and a beautifully mournful garden by Pascal Cribier, abandoned by its owners. The focus is on Paris, so leaving out the numerous exciting gardens that exist beyond the capital.

The book is sumptuously produced and filled with the elegant photography of Marion Brenner. The author – also credited as the book’s designer – gives the photographs plenty of space to speak for themselves. The result is a beautiful book, intelligently written, that will provide anyone interested in garden design with a primer of the work of French designers.

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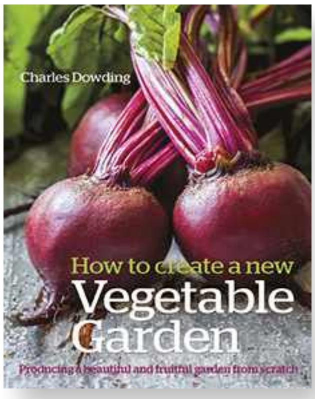
Book reviews



HOW TO CREATE A NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN: PRODUCING A BEAUTIFUL AND FRUITFUL GARDEN FROM SCRATCH
by Charles Dowding

Green Books, £19.99
ISBN 978-0857842442

A useful and practical introduction to growing vegetables in your garden from the enthusiastic exponent of the no-dig method.

Reviewer Mark Diacono is a food and garden writer.

If you have yet to visit Charles's garden in Somerset, do familiarise yourself with it from the photographs in his latest book: it is one of the most inspiring, abundant edible gardens I've seen and it's impossible not to want to learn some of its lessons.

Thankfully, this useful book conveys exactly that. A champion of the no-dig approach, Charles details how to create a new garden following his methods – developed over decades – without digging or cultivating the soil. It is a determinedly, brilliantly practical book, giving you all the tools to replicate his approach to whatever degree you want; yet it is also wonderfully inspiring.

In essence, Charles's approach front-loads the effort into creating a clean slate for growing, without the usual persistent weeds. This start-up effort, he argues, frees up more time and brain space for real creativity in the months and years that follow. Charles's thoughtfully structured and well-illustrated book details all of this superbly, covering each step in detail, as well as the crucial steps of raising healthy seedlings.

This book carries much of Charles's personality with it: he is meticulous, open and frank in communicating pros and cons, and thorough, rigorous and entertaining.

There are many reasons I wish I was 20 years younger, and Charles's book is yet another. It may make you wish – as it does me – that you had this when you started out, you may want to sweep aside your current veg patch and start again. Or, if you're just starting off, it may leave you slightly perplexed as to why anyone would want to grow annual vegetables in any other way. Even if you're not ready to adopt Charles's approach wholesale, there is much to enjoy and learn in this book that is essential reading for vegetable growers, old or new.

Book offer
RRP £19.99. **Reader offer price £18.50** including p&p.

Other books

Whether you want to create a wild-flower meadow or a wildly flamboyant shed, there is a book this month to inspire you.

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by Sally Coulthard
Jacqui Small, £25
ISBN 978-1909342804
Clever ideas – from fabrics to furniture and wood-burning stoves – to turn an ordinary garden shed into a fabulous hideaway.

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Gardens of Cornwall

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by Katherine Lambert, photographs by Alex Ramsay
Frances Lincoln, £12.99
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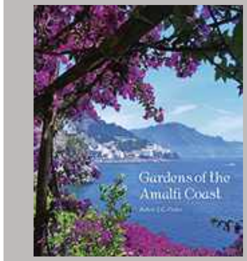

GARDENS OF THE AMALFI COAST
by Robert Fisher
Frances Lincoln, £20
ISBN 978-0711236547
Another new paperback, featuring 24 gorgeous southern Italian gardens in one beautiful book.

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Frances Lincoln, £14.99
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Reader offers

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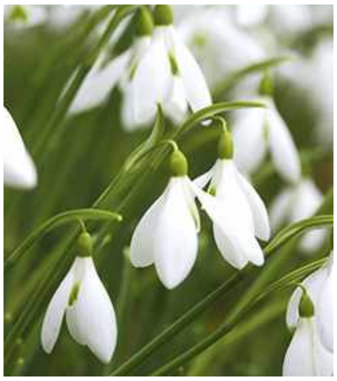
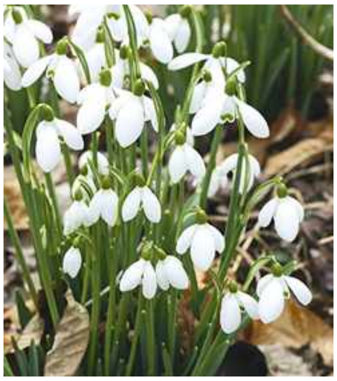
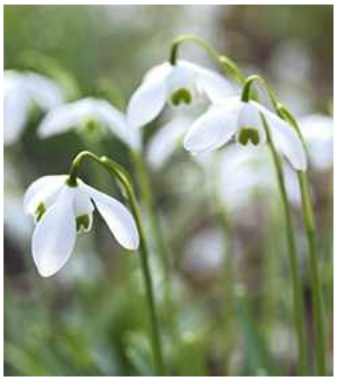


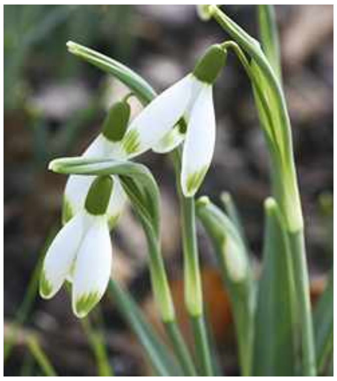
3 x *Galanthus* 'Atkinsii'
A building block to any snowdrop collection, this early hybrid form was being traded back in 1875. Tall stemmed with distinctive, long-pointed outer petals, it is elegant, vigorous and clumps up well.



3 x *Galanthus* 'S. Arnott'
Large, rounded flowers open wide to release a honey scent. Long stemmed and quite long flowering. Although more or less sterile so no seed is produced, it does clump up nicely.



1 x *Galanthus* 'Ophelia'
An early flowering Greatorex double galanthus. Tightly globular in flower, the first blooms are full of petals, though a secondary shorter-stemmed flower may fail to open properly.



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Plant offer on Penelope Hobhouse's 100 recommended plants

On page 39, the respected garden designer and plantswoman Penelope Hobhouse shares her recommendations on 100 plants she thinks every gardener should grow. If you've been inspired to try a new plant or return to some old favourites, here's an exclusive reader offer. Award-winning nursery Hortus Loci and online plant supplier plantify.co.uk are offering a 10% discount on a selection of Penelope's 100 favourite plants.

How to order To see which plants are available and make orders go to **hortusloci.co.uk/buy/gardens-illustrated-top-100-plants**. Alternatively, for a free plant list call 01753 336123. (New plant lines may be added as they become available.)

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The celebrated garden designer chooses her favourite plants that deserve a place in any garden

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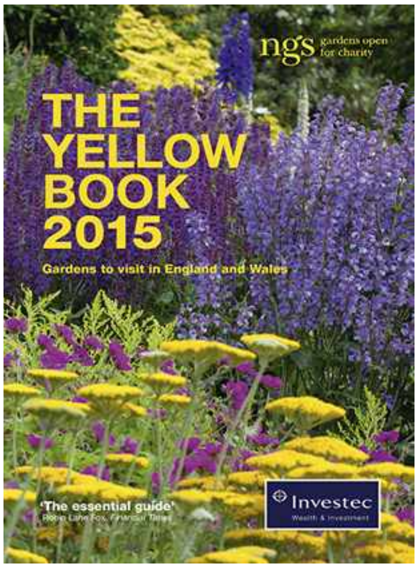

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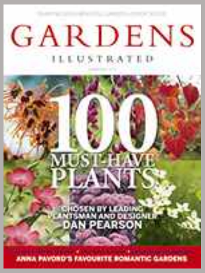

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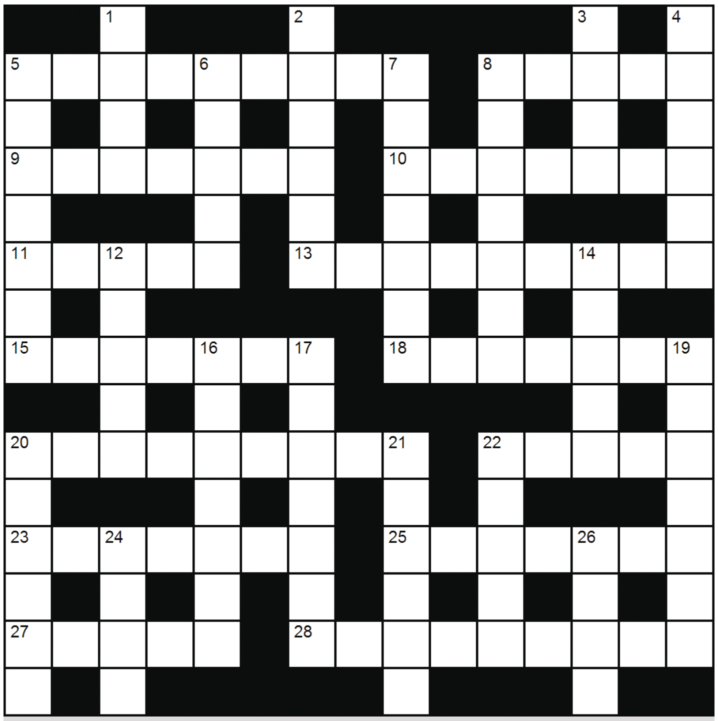
Crossword



ACROSS
5/7 Yellow wildflower, genus *Lotus* – if sort of tri-lobed, perhaps (5,4,7)
8 The linden tree genus – in tormentil I assume (5)
9 Plant of the borage family – such an 'A', maybe (7)
10 Train this fast-growing broad bean? (7)
11 Broken boles' leaf divisions (5)
13 *Montbretia* genus – bit removed from macrobiotics, possibly (9)
15 *Taxus*: popular with topiarists (3,4)
18 Aquatic plant leaf – awfully pallid around end of February (4,3)
20 Medicinal plant, of homeopathic use, initially hard, broken spare rib (4,5)
22 A national turnip-like vegetable! (5)
23 Green-leafed vegetable – creates awful pains, cold, then hot (7)
25 Plant with sword-like, silvery leaves – is a late variety (7)
27 Turn aside part of papaver transplant (5)
28/14 *Acer griseum* produces apple 'Pam Barker' (9,5)

DOWN
1 'GQT' chairman's first, endless heath genus (4)
2 Common virus affecting leaves – a bitty work of art! (6)
3 The blackthorn fruit's sluggish, we hear (4)
4 Shrub with large palmate leaves and small white umbels, a Fiat's demolished! (6)
5 Cooking apple: *Malus*, initially put in mixed barley (7)
6 Beer is the downfall of these garden pests (5)
7 See 5 across.
8 Cultivated ground's upper layer (7)
12 Shady place in the garden – for violinist? (5)
14 See 28 across.
16 Dig out and put elsewhere in the garden (7)
17 Pea Ruth cultivated to draw up soil around a plant (5,2)
19 Progressive death of shoots etc (7)
20 Commonly called plantain lilies – one in crowds (6)
21 Like waterlogged ground (6)
22 Woodland god's hybrid hellebore (5)
24 Genus of shrubs aka sweetspire… in white ash (4)
26 Nutrient-rich soil initially left over after mulching (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

JANUARY'S SOLUTIONS
ACROSS 1 Shrivel **8** Ends **9** Rears **10** Rain **11/5** Woolly aphids **12** Borecole **14** Bindweed **16** Potash **18** Wasabi **20** Mutation **22** Cats-tail **24** Dried **25** Stun **26** Cream **27** Iris **28** Briars **29** Nosegay. **DOWN 1** Santolina **2** Rustled **3** Verey **4** Leafbud **5** Ass **6** Haricot **7** Drill **13** Repot **15** Erica **17** Sword lily **19** Amsonia **20** Mullein **21** Twining **23** Aster **24** Domes **26** Cos.

DECEMBER'S PRIZE CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS (answer to the question: Amaryllis)
ACROSS 1 Biggs **4** Malus **7** Taproots **11** Straggly **12** Inter **13** Litter **14** Lady Balfour **16** Sea holly **17** Thin out **18** Knotweed **22** Molehills **24** Snowdrops **26** Scoparius **29** Cucumbers **32** Wong **34** Lancelot **35** Crystal **38** Wreaths **40** Pot marigold **41** Riddle **44** Grasmere **45** Serrated **46** Toted **47** Sinks. **DOWN 1** Bethlehem **2** Gladdon **3** Sagebrush **4** Mayfly **5** Lei 6 Saturates **7** Tares **8** Pollarded **9** Outdoor **10** Trellises **15** Ornus **19** Eroica **21** Albion **23** Loo **25** Ore **26** Snow White **27** Allotment **28** Sheeps-bit **29** Croft **30** Marginals **31** Standards **33/20** Guelder rose **36** Snowman **37/42** Ragged robin **39** Shred **43** Nut. **48** Damascena.

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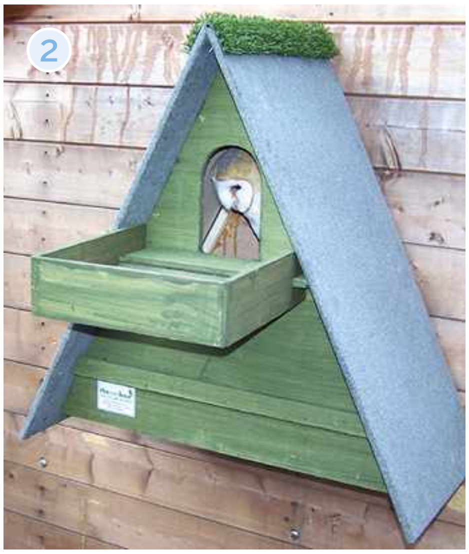

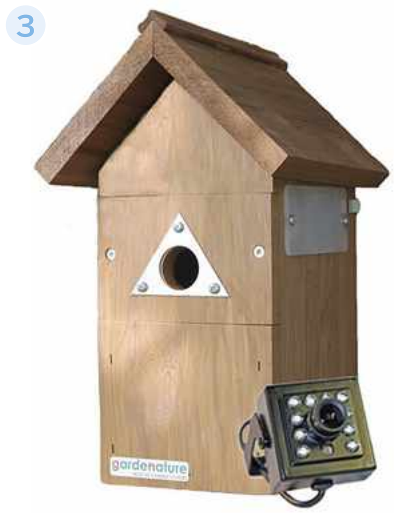

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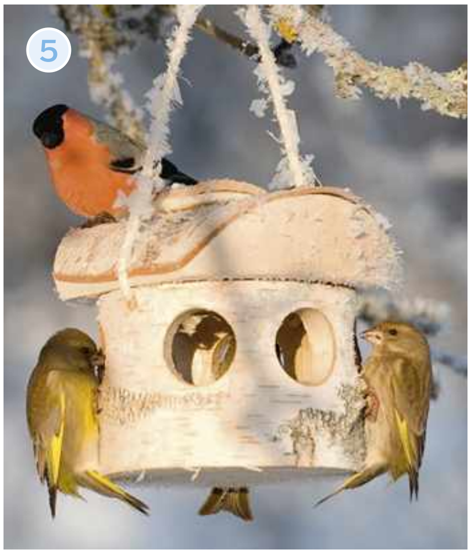

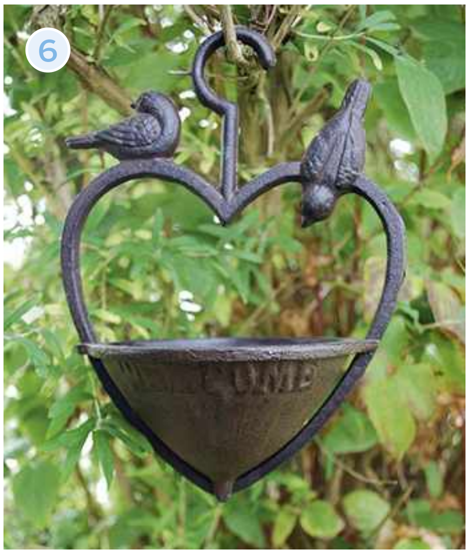

Spectacular snowdrops

Nothing represents the beauty of winter quite like a breathtaking snowdrop display, and here are some of the finest Britain has to offer. Make the trip and indulge

1 WATERPERRY GARDENS

Celebrate the first signs of spring with Snowdrop Weekends at Waterperry Gardens. The ornamental gardens will be carpeted with more than 30 different varieties of snowdrop, with free tours on the weekends of 14 and 21 Feb (entrance fee applies). Opening times: 10am – 5pm January – March, 10am – 5.30pm April – October. Party bookings welcome by arrangement.

ADDRESS **Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ**
TEL **01844 339254**
WEB **waterperrygardens.co.uk**

2 RODE HALL AND GARDENS

Snowdrop Walks
Come and see one of the most spectacular displays of snowdrops in the North with over 70 different varieties set in a stunning Humphry Repton landscape. 7 February – 8 March open daily, except Mondays, 11am – 4pm.

ADDRESS **Scholar Green, Cheshire ST7 3QP**
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WEB **rodehall.co.uk**

3 CHIPPENHAM PARK GARDENS

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ADDRESS **Chippenham, Near Newmarket, Cambs CB7 5PT**
TEL **01638 721416**
WEB **chippenhamparkgardens.co.uk**

4 HEVER CASTLE

Follow a snowdrop trail through the grounds of Hever Castle, once the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, and enjoy the early blossoms of camellia and quince in the award-winning gardens. Meander along the paths for fabulous snowdrop displays and enjoy blankets of these delicate flowers alongside the double moat that surrounds the 700-year-old castle.

ADDRESS **Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG**
TEL**01732 865224**
WEB **hevercastle.co.uk**

5 BENINGTON LORDSHIP GARDENS

Historic ruins serve as a spectacular backdrop to the wonderful display of naturalised snowdrops at Benington Lordship. As home to a collection of 200 named snowdrop varieties, this garden is a must-see attraction for any keen galanthophile. Plant sales. Open daily 12–4pm, 7 February – 1 March 2015. Homemade soup, cream teas and cakes.

ADDRESS **Benington Lordship, Stevenage, Herts SG2 7BS**
TEL **01438 869668**
WEB **beningtonlordship.co.uk**

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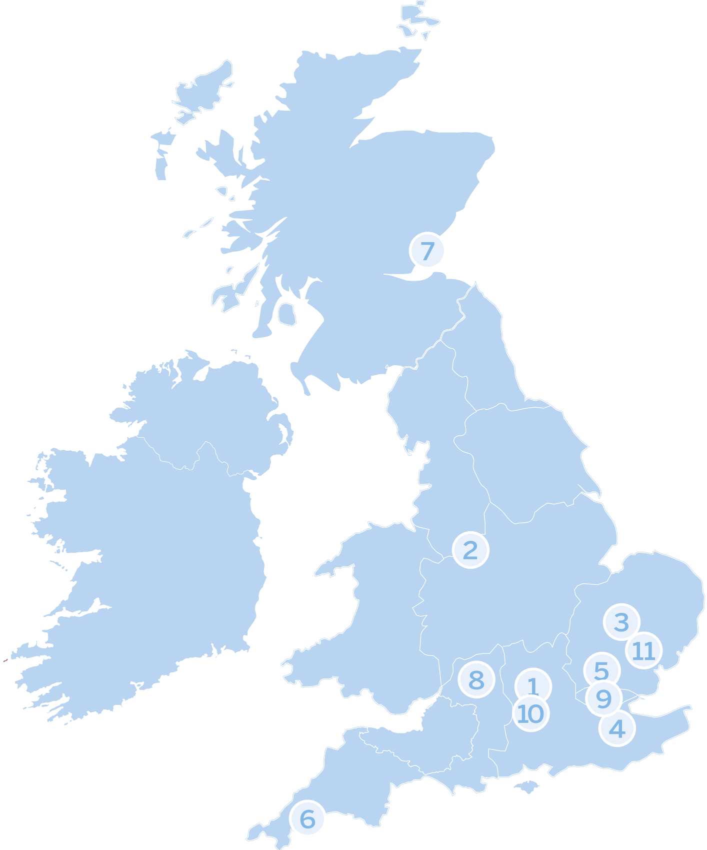

7 CAMBO GARDENS

The popularity of our workshops and events held around snowdrop time has led to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the transformation of a historic stable block into a new visitor and learning centre, ready for 2015. Don't miss the Snowdrops by Starlight! Mail order bulbs. Open daily 10am – 4.30pm. Adults £5.50, children free.

ADDRESS **Kingsbarns, St Andrews,**
Fife KY16 8QD
TEL **01333 450054**
WEB **camboestate.com**

8 COLESBOURNE PARK

Started in the 1880s by plant collector Henry John Elwes FRS the snowdrop collection has been enhanced greatly in recent years by great-grandson Henry Elwes and his wife Carolyn. Ten acres with lakeside and woodland paths, 250 varieties of snowdrop and visitors can also see the church and intriguing blue lake. Teas and plant sales. Gates open 1 pm. £7.50; children free, dogs welcome. Open 31 January and every Sat and Sun in February until 1 March.

ADDRESS **Colesbourne Park,**
Gloucestershire GL53 9NP
TEL **01242 870264**
WEB **snowdrop.org.uk**

9 CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

Get up close with those harbingers of spring: snowdrops. Enjoy the opportunity to take an eye-level view, with displays allowing you to appreciate their subtle complexities. Many of the bulbs, shrubs and perennials on display will be available to buy from a marquee where garden experts will guide you through choosing the best of these winter delights. The event includes a variety of walks, talks and workshops with garden and snowdrop specialists.

ADDRESS **66 Royal Hospital Road,**
London SW3 4HS
TEL **020 7352 5646**
WEB **chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk**

10 WELFORD PARK

Welford Park has magnificent carpets of snowdrops. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 11am – 4pm in February. Plant sale Thursday 26 February 2015.Tea Rooms serving fresh local lunch and tea, and snowdrop giftshop.

ADDRESS **Welford Park,**
Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HU
TEL **01488 608691**
WEB **welfordpark.co.uk**

11 MARKS HALL GARDENS AND ARBORETUM

There is inspiration to be found at Marks Hall in the depths of winter. In February, the charming woodland of Robins Grove has a glorious carpet of three varieties of delicate white nodding snowdrops. A wonderful spectacle for the whole family.

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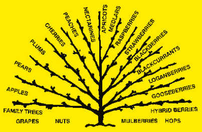

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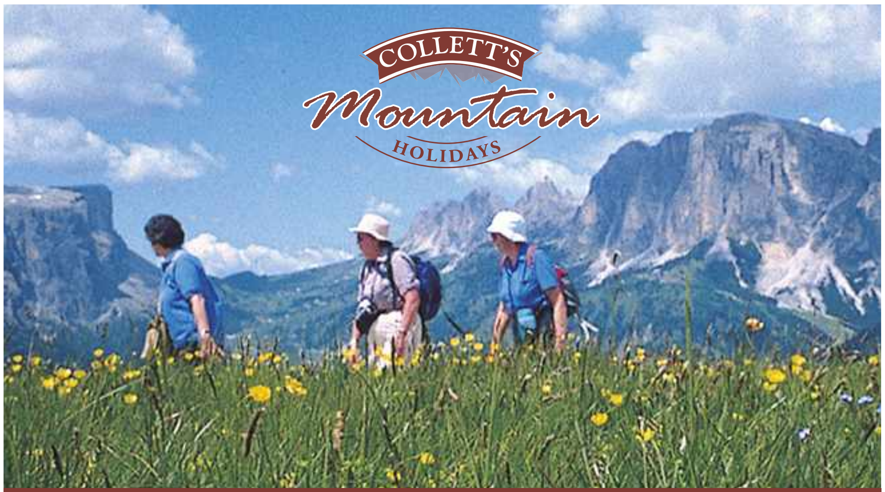

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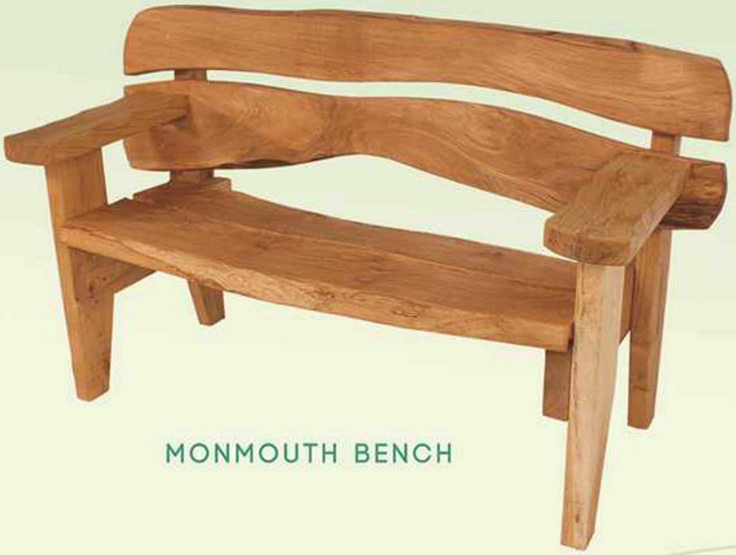
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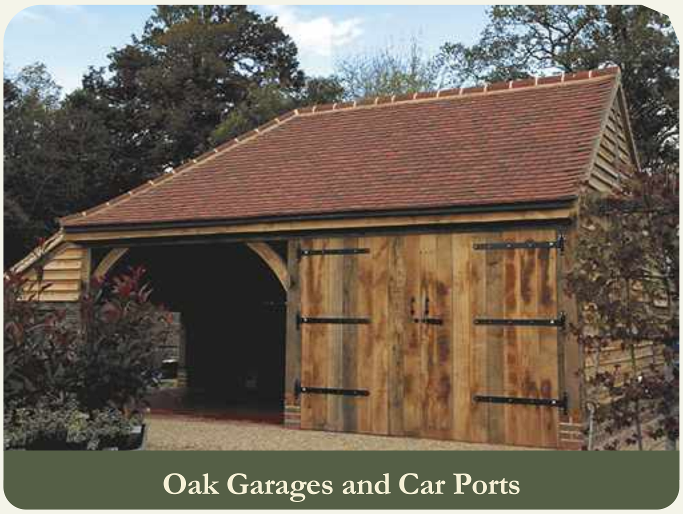

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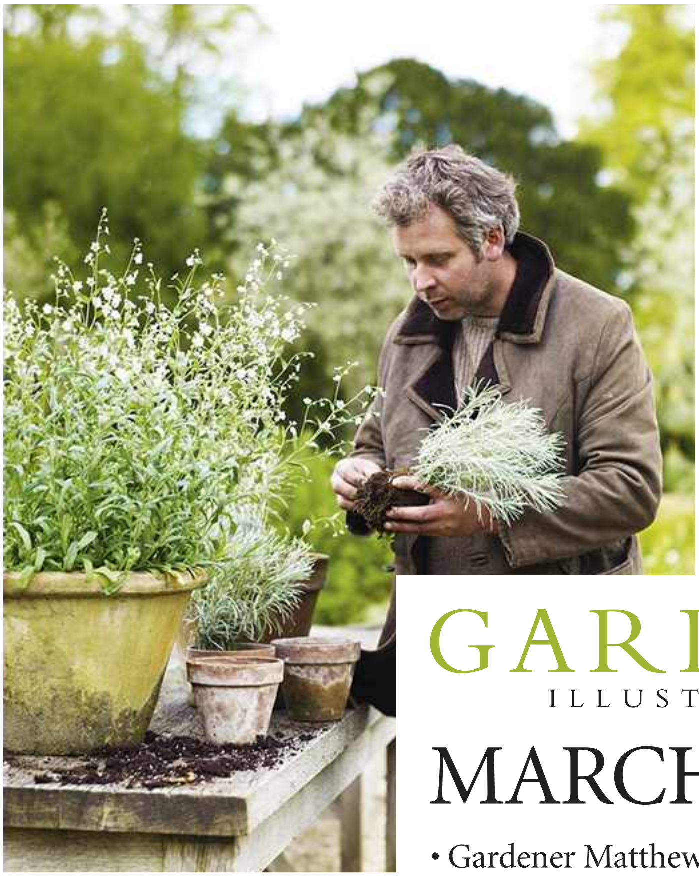

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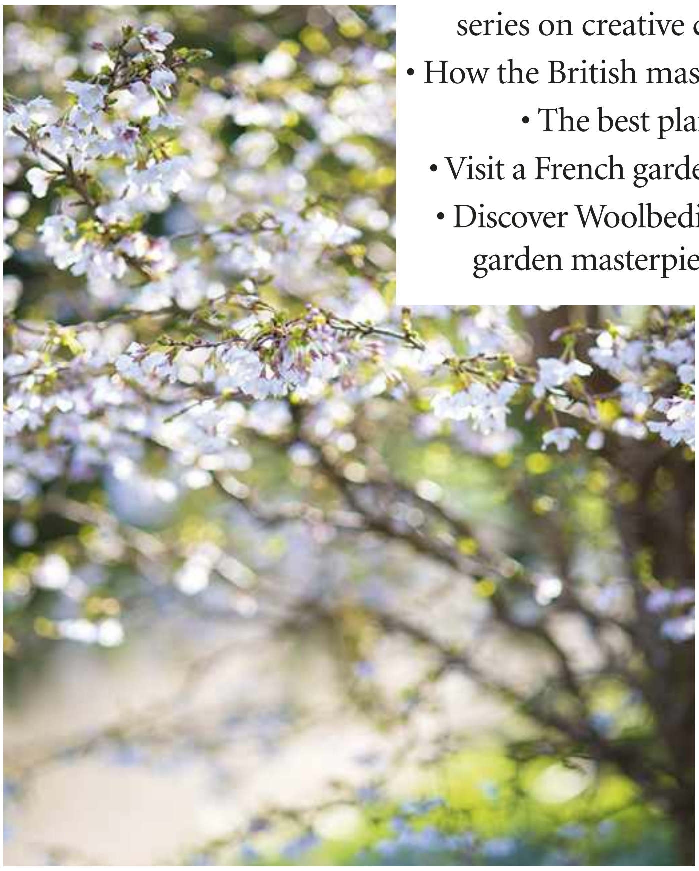

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Grand designs

An end to California's drought feels like a good omen for Frank as he plans his new garden

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **ANGELA HARDING**

There is one lemon tree, in the wrong place, which I hope won't resent a change of quarters

It began to rain the day we moved in. That should have been an annoyance, having to shuttle furniture from the storage in an open pick-up, but it seemed more like a benediction. A damp mattress is no price at all to pay for the prospect of life returning to the garden. On the radio they were calling it a storm, but really it was just four days of steady, warm showers, seducing hydrophobic soil that had lost the memory of water, turning dust to mud; showing, at last, in this garden, where things might be planted.

This is an acre, near the top of a hill, facing north, about ten miles inland from Ventura in Southern California. There are nice views to the hills on the other side of the valley, which have all the right angles to catch the sunset. The sunset is often an enchanting shade of pink. We are near enough to the sea to catch fresh breezes and far enough away to avoid the murk and fog that haunts the Californian coast. Further inland the Ojai Valley can be unbearably hot. Whoever built this house, I think and hope, was someone with an eye for the optimum spot.

It is a 1950s ranch bungalow, considered an old house by local standards. The ranch has long been sacrificed to make other houses, but they are not very obvious from where we sit. Half the land surrounds the house, in a garden-like way; the rest falls steeply below it. There are plenty of good trees, dominated by the local coastal live oak, *Quercus agrifolia*, a thing of immense character and charm, with eccentrically wandering boughs and tightly dense leaves.

There are vast areas of ivy ground cover beneath the trees, which will have to go. It isn't even a nice kind of ivy, though you see it in almost every landscaping scheme in this part of the world. I can see the temptation, in an awkward place, to plant the one thing that you know will succeed, but there is no excuse for planting something so depressing to look at, and I could no more live with it than I could live with swathes of *Hypericum* at home.

There is one lemon tree, in the wrong place, which I hope won't resent a change of quarters, and four pomegranate saplings, struggling to exist at all. We were told there was an avocado but have yet to find it. There is some crazy paving, which looks positively tasteful beside the pink concrete slabs of which there are a lot more.

Otherwise there is not much garden to speak of. The previous owner conscientiously gave up watering in the drought, so what were her lawns and flowerbeds are no more, save for scraps of coarse grass reappearing with the rain. There is an irisy leaf which began to poke out everywhere as soon as it was wet – it might be *Hesperantha*, or it might be something more charming – whatever it is, I suspect it will be a struggle to manage.

It is hard to know where to begin. At the moment I am still at the wandering and chin rubbing stage. All the paths and beds seem to be in the wrong place, and it is worth trying to work out why they were placed like that before attempting to correct them. The reason is probably that what used to be the front of the house is now the back, and subsequent adjustments were made piecemeal and on whims. There needs to be a grander, more intelligent plan.

I have an idea that the steep slope might be planted with olives, which should look good from above, perhaps interlaced with the odd helicopterous climber. Otherwise, as there will be no more lawns, and meadows don't work here, there will be a lot of bed in need of filling. I like the idea of crowds of succulents and blocks of annuals, so a good start might be to get propagating. ☐

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

READER EVENT

Don't miss the chance to hear Frank discuss his thoughts on the great contradictions of creating a garden the GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival in April. For more details on this and other events, and to find out how to book tickets see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

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